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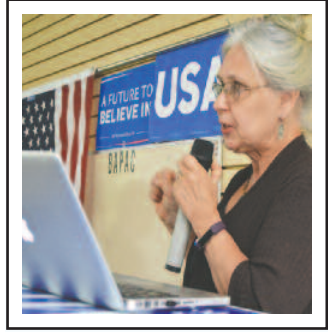
# The Review

## Hamtramck

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## Quick Hits

This Sunday the public is invited to a swearing-in ceremony for newly elected public officials.

Mayor Karen Majewski will be starting her fourth term, and Councilmember incumbents Andrea Karpinski and Ian Perrotta enjoyed reelection to another term.

Newcomer Fadel Al-Marsoumi will be starting out his first term on council.

The ceremony will be at the public library and starts at 1 p.m.

The ceremony promises to be short, and folks can gather with their elected officials and take photos. There will also be light refreshments.

Stop by and wish your elected officials good luck in their new terms.

## 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 turnaround is because of a supportive Board of Education who work together extremely well.”**

## — HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —

# ‘Newsmaker of the Year’ is a story of a phenomenal comeback

**By Charles Sercombe**

Once again, deciding who should be Newsmaker of the Year was a tough one.

Hamtramck is always rich in people, events and trends that make long-lasting impacts.

This year, without further ado, we announce our Newsmaker of the Year:

The Hamtramck Public School District.

Not only has the district climbed out of a \$6.5 million budget deficit and turned that into an \$8.1 million surplus in recent years, it has also expanded.

For many years the district had to shed buildings as it struggled to rebuild its student body count in the face of competition from a dozen or so charter school options available to parents and students.



**Proof of the Hamtramck Public School District's turnaround came when it purchased a building to house the ever-increasing number of students who are enrolling each year.**

But the tide turned.

More and more parents found out that charter schools, in many instances, had much less to offer and returned their kids back into the traditional public schooling system.

The district now has 3,326 students enrolled, up from 2,834 just four years ago.

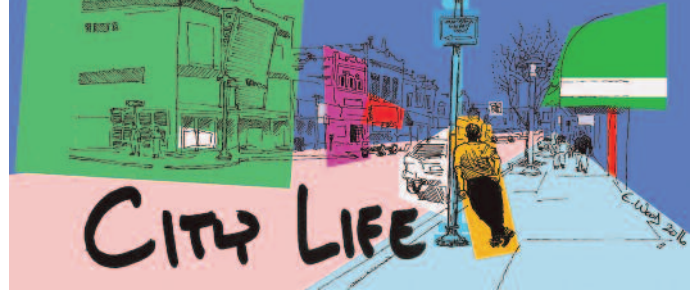
The regrowth has happened so rapidly that the district found itself in the unique position of needing more classrooms. An opportunity came knocking when a local charter school closed and the building it was in became available.

It took skillful negotiations, but the school district managed to snag the building, which also happened to have historical significance to the

**Continued on page 3**



**It's no surprise the Detroit City Football Club has enjoyed so much success here: Hamtramck has always been a welcoming community.**



## Adventures close to home 2017

(This is part two of Walter Wasacz's review of the past year.)

**By Walter Wasacz**

Last week I began to recap what I consider the best moments of this column from the past year. I'm happy to say there were a lot, so many I had to split it up into two parts. I'm also adding comments to the original text to clarify or amplify the ideas that were at the heart of my year in Hamtramck city life.

In “WW and JFK,” I revisited this memory of my father that has a mythic, larger than life quality about it:

**Continued on page 5**

## Water bills prompt a review

**By Charles Sercombe**

Some homeowners have received a shocking surprise in the mail over the last several weeks.

It's the city's water bill for past use.

Not surprisingly, the new bills have caused a flurry of concern from customers. One business, which asked not to be named, received a bill for over \$70,000. That business is taking a wait-and-see position until the city decides what to do about collecting.

Others had a more immediate reaction

Homeowner Sabur Ghazi received a bill for \$10,000 for his two-family house on Danforth.

“I thought I was going to have a heart attack,” Ghazi said.

The bills are the result of new devices being installed throughout town. According to the new reading devices, many households received bills in the past that did not correctly reflect their actual water use.

In other words, the old meters were recording the correct amount used, but the device that electronically sent that information to the city was faulty and underreporting actual usage.

So far, no one has had to pay the back bills. A city council sub-committee is studying the issue and will come up with a recommendation on what to do. The options are: Demand full payment, ask for a percentage of the bill or – the least likely, wipe the

**Continued on page 2**

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# Water bills prompt a review

Cont. from front page

slate clean. Acting City Manager Kathy Angerer said the committee is leaning toward excusing 75 percent of the bill, but no final decision has been made yet. Angerer said that while the city is at fault for the mechanical failure the fact remains that “somebody was using that water.” Angerer said she expects a decision on what to do with the bills will be made before the city hires a permanent city manager. For those who will face paying a high bill, the city will work out a payment plan. That appointment could take place in January.

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## School Bell

### School Board

• The School Board will hold an organizational meeting on Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m. in the Administrative Office, 3201 Roosevelt.

### All Schools

• Monday, January 8 – School resumes for all students.

### Recreation Department News

• Girls Volleyball: Start date TBA. Time: 4 p.m. Grades 4th –8th Uniform provided, \$15 resident. \$25 non-resident.

• Junior League Basketball: Co-Ed. Ages 8-13. Locations KMS/DW,

D. East, Holbrook. Starts Saturday, January 20 at Community Center at 1 p.m. \$15 resident. \$25 non-resident.

• Soccer Clinic: Co-Ed ages 7-13. Practice held at the Community Center. Starts Saturday, January 20, \$15 resident. \$25 non-resident.

• Open Basketball: For students ages 11- 18. High school students need student ID for entry. January 3-5 from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Compiled by  
**Janice Gandelman**

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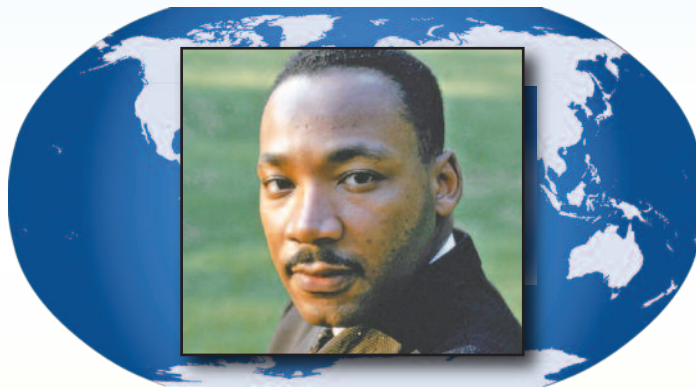
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## This week at the library...

**ESL Class** – Monday, January 8, 9 a.m. and noon, ESL classes are free to all Hamtramck residents. Registration is required.

**ESL Class** – Wednesday, January 10, 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. ESL classes are free to all Hamtramck residents. Registration is required.

**ESL Class** – Friday, January 12, 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. ESL classes are free to all Hamtramck residents. Registration is required.

**"Build your Bird Feeder"** – Thursday, January 11 at 4 to 5 p.m.

Please join us at the Hamtramck Public Library for a make and take craft for kids of all ages.

**2018 Free Tax Services** – Free service for those whose annual household income is less than \$54,000. Monday, February 5-March 26, 10 a.m.-4p.m. Closed February 19, 2018. Call (734) 284-6999 for an appointment.

**ABCmouse.com** – Now available at the Hamtramck Public Library, ABCmouse.com is a free digital learning resource for children

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**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) 733-6822, or visit its website at <http://hamtramck.lib.mi.us> where you can also access the online catalog. The library is located at 2360 Caniff.**



# Second Front Page

## Arctic freeze captures the region and much of the country

By Charles Sercombe

Here we are not even a few weeks into the beginning of winter, and a bitter cold arctic blast has already put the region – including most of the country – into a deep freeze.

As The Review went to press Thursday, temperatures dipped down to the single digits for the highs and minus degrees for the lows.

According to weather forecasters the Detroit area will get a break this Monday when temps will climb to the low 30s – something that will feel like a heatwave.

But that rise will only be temporary. For the rest of the week highs will only be in the 20s.

Not only has it been super cold, we have already experienced record amounts of snowfall for this time of the year.

If it's already this cold, this soon, what's to expect for the remainder of



Hamtramckans are bundling up to face the bitter cold temperatures that have hit the region and country as well. From the looks of things, the cold snap is going to last the entire winter.

the winter season?

It's not good.

According to the Old Farmer's Almanac, which some dismiss has a bunch of hocus pocus, the bitter cold will continue along with heavy snowfall. It's all due to the low number of sunspot

activity, plus some other factors the book does not reveal.

According to actual science, you can blame La Nina winds for this year's unusual cold snap – and yes, more snow.

The only warm spots in the continental US are

southern Florida and southern California.

For those with their eyes on the calendar, winter has another 11 weeks until the first day of spring, which is March 20.

No word yet on what's coming for summer.

## ‘Newsmaker of the Year’ is a story of a phenomenal comeback

Continued from front page



School Superintendent Tom Niczay and the school board have worked together to dig the district out of a budget deficit to a point where there is now a growing budget surplus.

community. The former Tau Beta building on Hanley once served Hamtramck's rapidly expanding Polish immigrant community back in the 1920s.

At the Tau Beta Center, immigrants were taught how to assimilate into their new country.

Many old-timers have fond memories of the building.

This rebirth came under the guidance of Superintendent Tom Niczay and the School Board.

Asked how the district managed to make this dramatic turnaround, Niczay said it all had to do with sacrifice and determination.

“The turnaround is because of a supportive Board of Education who work together extremely well,” said Niczay. “Their decisions are based on what is best for the district as a whole.”

As for the financial comeback, Niczay was quick to credit the district's chief financial officer, Sherry Lynem, and her staff.

Helping out, too, were school employees, including teachers, who all had to take a financial cut to see through the rough times.

“We were extremely happy to make up lost wages and unfreeze salary steps during the most recent contract negotiations,” Niczay said.

The district's success story didn't stop there in recent years. For the second year in a row the district enjoyed a partnership with the Detroit City Football Club, which experienced phenomenal fan attendance last year.

The soccer team leases Keyworth Stadium, which the district owns, and in turn it has pumped hundreds of

thousands of dollars into renovating the 1930s-era stadium.

Not only has the team attracted wild fan support, local businesses have also seen spillover from fans. Our local bars and restaurants have enjoyed upticks in business on game days, and there is reasonable suspicion to believe there has been an increase in investments locally from this fan interest.

The district also embraced the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which aims to get kids more active in sports and health activities. The program was presented at Keyworth Stadium last July, and it was met with open arms here.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. was the former owner of the Buffalo Bills football team. He died a few years ago, but his wife, Mary, is carrying on the foundation's mission.

She was on hand at the event and said her husband's foundation is prepared to donate millions of dollars to local programs across the country that promote kids being more physically active.

Hamtramck school officials are hoping to partner up with the Wilson Foundation down the road.

The future for the school district is now looking brighter than ever before.



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**Jan. 13** - Soup Kitchen, 2-4 pm  
**Feb. 2** - Blessing of Candles, Mass 7 pm  
**Feb. 3** - Blessing of Throats, Mass 10 am  
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# Open market attracts hundreds of craft merchants and revelers



**By Charles Sercombe**

Hamtramck may have a new holiday tradition.

A couple weeks before Christmas, the newly-opened Woodward Throwbacks hosted an open market in its two-story building that featured artists, crafts and a host of other talented folks selling their wares.

The former auto dealership was packed with shoppers and revelers.

Those attending could also indulge in home-made food and craft

beer.

The event, a rarity for Hamtramck, inspired organizers to plan for similar offerings in the coming year.

Woodward Throwbacks is located at Jos. Campau and Casmere and specializes in creating custom furniture out of reclaimed wood. The building was once home to Garrity Dodge.

**Scenes from the recent Open Market held at Woodward Throwbacks a few weeks ago.**



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## School district gets early Christmas present

**By Alan Madeleine**

*Special to The Review*

They are here – and anyone with an interest in Hamtramck Schools should be glad for it.

The "They" in this story is the We Are Here Foundation, which has just donated \$30,000 worth of classroom and office furniture to the Hamtramck schools. The organization also partnered with the office supply chain, Staples.

Which particular schools benefitted, and what they specifically received, was not mentioned in the press release The Review re-

ceived. The 501'c'3 foundation is centered in Mt. Clemens, and has as its primary stated function the cleaning up of their nearby waterways. They estimate helping pull out 8.5 million tons of debris from the Clinton River and Lake St. Clair over the past two decades.

The group delivered the school furniture to the lucky recipients in five truck loads in November. Schools in Highland Park and Centerline also benefitted this year. Other districts in the area will likely become next year's beneficiaries.

They gain most of the

money and goods they pay forward through soliciting private and corporate donations of used boats and cars, or else through direct donations of gently used office furniture. They modestly deflect most of the kudos to Staples.

If you are interested in donating or just want to know more about the program, contact Tom Cleaver at the Foundation, at either (586) 463-9400, or on his email at cleave@aol.com.

Meanwhile, some students and faculty around here will be sitting pretty for some time to come.

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source: the350project.net

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# Review: Opinion Page

## In Our Opinion

### Here’s to looking forward to a new year

Well, here we are in the first week of the new year. As is usual at this time of the year, most of us have high hopes for the coming year. For the city, we are confident that its progress and growth will continue. As we noted on the front page of this issue, the Hamtramck Public School District deserves much praise for its accomplishments in the past year. The school district has been a key partner with the city in making massive improvements and is a major contributor to the city’s phenomenal economic growth. Hamtramck is definitely on the map these days for developers. One of the biggest influences, we feel, has been the huge success of the Detroit City Football Club and its partnership with the school district, and to an extent also the city. That club’s amazing fan support has undoubtedly attracted developers and investors. Hamtramck’s real estate is red hot right now, and we expect more empty buildings to be snatched up in the coming year. If you are not a participant in the city’s economic comeback, consider yourself tipped off: Now is the time to invest. What’s even more gratifying is the number of young adults starting up businesses here and successfully finding their niche. Hamtramck is a textbook example of how to reinvent a city. While some of our infrastructure needs repairing, we have good bones here – a foundation that can easily be built up again. Hamtramck is going to have an exciting year ahead. You can bet on it.

## Odds & Ends

**Condolences...** At the time we went to press Thursday, there was not much information available, but it was with great sadness that we heard about the passing of Kathleen Hanlon of the public school district. Hanlon died on Jan. 2. She was a much beloved member of the Horizon High School staff and will be very much missed. Our thoughts go out to her family and friends.

**New term...** The city council held its first meeting on Tuesday, which was set up just to take care of some housekeeping duties. The year’s meeting schedule was adopted as well as the appointment of the Mayoral Pro Tem. Once again it was Councilmember Anam Miah who will serve in the two-year appointment. The vote was completed in one passing, which is a little unusual. In past years it took several tries before an agreement was reached. Miah has been a lightening rod during the past few years, having clashed with former City Manager Katrina Powell on a number of issues. In what some insiders considered a surprise move, newly-elected Councilmember Fadel Al-Marsoumi voted along with Councilmembers Miah, Abu Musa and Saad Almasmari to appoint Miah to the position. Those voting against Miah were Councilmembers Andrea Karpinski and Ian Perrotta. Mayor Karen Majewski had no vote on the matter, unless there had been a tie. It was thought that Al-Marsoumi would be voting along the lines of Karpinski, Perrotta and Majewski since they kind of ran as a slate in the recent election. Miah and Councilmembers Karpinski and Perrotta and Mayor Majewski have also clashed in the last few years on many issues. With Al-Marsoumi’s vote in this matter, his relationship with his former slate mates is going to be strained – at the very least. How this plays out is going to be interesting.

### Adventures close to home 2017

Continued from front page

“There is one story about my father that was often told in the bars and social halls of the city, and it was told long after his passing. Many of those who retold the story are gone too. I fear it will disappear unless I keep the memory alive in living archives like this column.

“The story goes like this: In June 1957, Democrat John F. Kennedy, then junior U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, traveled to Detroit for an American Relief for Poland dinner. He was beginning to build his candidacy for a run at the presidency in 1960 with a series of targeted visits that would help build momentum with important groups of voters.

“A big part of JFK’s campaign strategy was to appeal to Eastern European ethnic communities in cities across the Midwest. An overwhelming percentage of Polish-Americans were Democrats in cities like Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Buffalo and Detroit. Energizing a voting bloc that large could mean the difference between winning and losing the election.

“My father was then the Detroit/Hamtramck president of a Cleveland-based organization called the Alliance of Poles of America, which was on Caniff at that time (in the building that now contains B&H Bar & Grill). Someone needed to pick Kennedy up from the airport and the task fell to him.

“When he arrived at the airport, my dad was stunned to see what he said was ‘just a kid wearing Levi’s’ getting off the plane. He was carrying his suit on a garment hanger and needed to change. They went into the men’s room to look for a stall, which cost a dime then to enter and lock. But Kennedy didn’t have a dime.

“So my father fished out a coin and opened the stall. When Kennedy emerged, he was said to ‘look like a million dollars.’ Which, of course, he was worth – and then some beyond that.”

To this I will add a recommendation for anyone interested in politics of that era to seek out the documentary film “Primary,” which follows Kennedy and then-rival Hubert Humphrey as they campaign in Wisconsin in the fall of 1960. It’s available as part of the Criterion Collection’s DVD/Blu-Ray box set called “The Kennedy Films of Robert Drew & Associates.”

After attending several playoff soccer games this summer, I was inspired to write about what I call the Hamtramck hospitality economy:

“One big takeaway from this weekend experience on two perfect July evenings was how welcoming Hamtramck has become. Hospitality is the city’s greatest asset, and in aggregate, its largest employer.

“Food, drink, football; art, music, theater; multiculturalism and diversity; affordability, walkability and street life: all are magnets for people seeking urban adventure, day and night. It’s all part of the new Hamtramck economy, and it is humming, understated and modest, on multiple fronts. If you have a good idea you can convert it to action and make it work here.

“It’s no surprise that Detroit City Football is a smash hit in Hamtramck. The city was built for public life, for strangers to meet and become friends; or, more probably, enjoy each other’s company for a night and never see each other again. Chance meetings and accidental discoveries are the law of the land within these two square miles of city life.”

One of my favorite pull-out quotes of 2017 was from Hamtramck Public Schools superintendent Thomas Niczay. After the school district purchased the building that housed the Academy of International Studies, Niczay told the Detroit Free Press that the school will serve the immediate neighborhood, saying:

“They (will) walk. It’s like a classic American situation here – families walking their kids to school.”

In City Life, I ran with the picture Niczay painted of what should be commonplace in a city built for basic pedestrian activity by digging up another quote:

“In a city the size of Hamtramck, walking is the best first option to reach your destination. Cycling is second best, getting there by car a distant third. The superintendent’s message to children and parents is an important one.

“Children that walk to school perform better in the classroom. From an article I found at irish-times.com: ‘A Dutch study of 20,000 children aged 5-19 proved that those who cycled or walked to school performed better on tests demanding concentration, the effects of which lasted up to four hours after they began the school day.’

“Now think about this, an idea sure to be considered absurd only a few years ago: today you can live in Hamtramck, not own a car and enjoy a high quality of life. I have a car, which I seldom drive, but I am currently imagining my life without it.

“I would save between \$1,200 and \$1,400 a year in insurance costs (that number is reasonable compared to others that pay much more), another \$500-\$1,000 in gas and basic maintenance (that number could be higher if serious repairs or replacement parts are needed).

“So let’s say without a car I save around \$2,500 per year. Ride sharing options, like Uber and Lyft, are available usually within minutes if I need to go to the greater downtown area; and for longer out of town trips I can do Zipcar (available in Hamtramck at zipcar.com/detroit). I am also open to sharing rides with friends who have cars. Otherwise, I walk or ride my bike (I need an upgrade, will be

Continued on page 6

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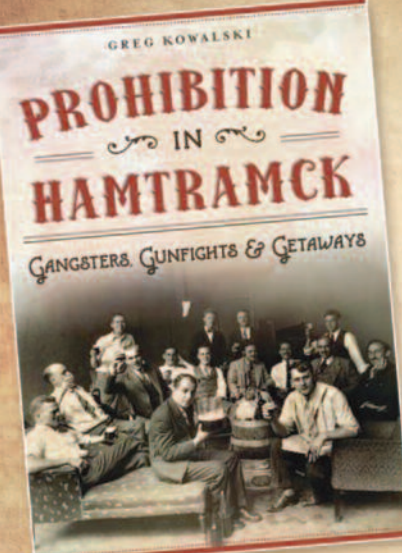
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**SATURDAY, January 13, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.** – Hamtramck’s Recycle Center is open at Caniff and McDougall. Drop off your recyclables for free.

Sudoku

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Solutions on page 7

**People's Community Services**


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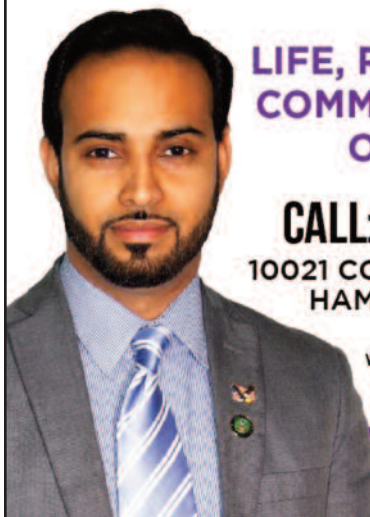
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Adventures close to home 2017

Continued from page 5

looking for a new or used cruiser this winter)."

Update: I am still looking for that cruiser, but by the looks of it the winter will be a long one and I will have plenty of time to find one.

In addition to walking as a way to benefit health of body and mind, I also integrated the relationship between two of my current passions: walkable discovery and creative economy advocacy.

As part of the latter I work with artists and entrepreneurs from Berlin who are making Hamtramck a destination for food, lodging, academic inquiry and social exploring when they are in Detroit.

Last winter, I met Martin Knispel, a German filmmaker doing a documentary he is calling "Detroit Diaries." He found a place to stay just west of Hamtramck, along the Plymouth/Caniff DDOT coach line, but he spent a good deal of time here – at Oloman Cafe, Bumbo's and Detroit Threads.

Part of that column, which discusses techno as a catalyst for economic and cultural growth, went like this:

"It is a cultural and social movement that has its origins in Detroit, in the 1980s, and is considered a high art form in Berlin. A German court ruled last year that popular techno spots like Berghain and Kraftwerk, where the Detroit-inspired Tresor clubs (there are four in one building and a larger performance space on an upper floor of a decommissioned power station) and label are housed, are not simply entertainment venues but on par with concert halls where symphonies, philharmonics and modern classical dance companies perform.

"Martin and I talked about that over a Bangladeshi/Indian buffet at Zam Zam on Conant, one of three Hamtramck commercial districts that could benefit from techno tourism. He says the difference he sees between techno in Detroit and Berlin is that it is not taken seriously as a business or industry here, despite its storied local origins.

"In Berlin, it's what drives the economy, by bringing tens of thousands of young people to the city each weekend," he said. "People come for other things too, for art and food and other kinds of music, but it is the excitement of participating in techno culture that is the key to it all. The city itself under-

stands this and markets Berlin as a place where creativity has economic value."

There is a lot to digest in that excerpt, but I want to highlight the last words of Knispel's quote: "A place where creativity has economic value."

He's talking about Berlin, but we are focusing on tactics and strategies that can work closer to home. Hamtramck can benefit by acknowledging it is creativity above all else that can lead the way to future cultural and economic growth.

It is a theme I will return to in future columns.

Enjoy the holidays, we'll keep walking and writing about we find in 2018.

Walter Wasacz is a Hamtramck writer and creative economy advocate who helped found the Detroit-Berlin Connection.

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By Charles Sercombe  
This week's Crime Log covers Dec. 23-30.

Saturday, December 23

- At about 2:30 a.m. a resident was ticketed for possessing an open bottle of intoxicant in public.
- A Klinger resident reported someone damaged two cars.
- A Florian resident reported a package stolen from their front porch.

Sunday, December 24

- A Detroit resident was arrested after a traffic stop for disorderly conduct and obstructing officers.
- At about 4 a.m. a Detroit resident was arrested after a traffic stop for drunk driving, driving without a license and being wanted on a Hamtramck warrant.

Monday, December 25

- A Detroit woman reported that while walking on the Caniff overpass, a male wearing all black clothing and a mask implied he had a gun and robbed her of her cell-phone and Michigan ID. The woman, who was seven months pregnant, was taken to Detroit Receiving Hospital for observation.

Tuesday, December 26

- At 2 a.m. a resident was arrested after a traffic stop for drunk driving and driving without a license.
- At 5:30 a.m. two women were arrested for domestic violence.
- A Detroit resident reported he had been carjacked.

Wednesday, December 27

- A Hamtramck resident reported their vehicle was stolen.
- Officers were dispatched to a building with multiple alarms going off. Officers found

Continued on page 8

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Published January 5, 2018

- A business reported a person changed a

- A Hanley resident reported someone slashed her car tire in front of her residence.



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