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**December 27, 2019**  
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# The Review

*Hamtramck*

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**— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —**

## Hamtramck shopping

**By Alan Madlane**

Still looking for a special gift? Fear Not, and Cheer Up.

All you've gotta do is hop on over to the Hamtramck Historical Museum, and once your eyeballs feast upon all the reasonably priced, pro-Hamtown goodies sittin' in one spot smack-dab there in front of you, well you will know you've got it good and you've got it made.

Know someone who loves reading? Take a look at the nearly dozen tomes about our fair city – nine of them penned by legendary Hamtramck historian Greg Kowalski, with intriguing titles like "Wicked Hamtramck: Lust, Liquor and Lead" or "Hamtramck: Legendary Locals."

Know someone with a lot of baggage? Get 'em a tote bag or zipper case to lug it all.

Uncle Sonny itchin' for a cool beverage? There are shot glasses and beer glasses, not to mention flasks. Auntie Freeze prefers her libations warm and toasty? There are coffee mugs, and hand-some ones too.

Someone in the family loves it here, comes down every chance they can? Help 'em shout out their love to the

**Continued on page 4**



# Take a look back at 2019 in our first part of 'Year in Review'

**By Charles Sercombe**

Did the year 2019 fly by, or what?

No matter – it's time, once again, to take a look back in our annual Year in Review.

This week, we will explore the first six months of 2019. So grab a warm beverage, and settle back.

## JANUARY

We started the year out with a follow-up on a shooting death that happened outside the MyHookah Lounge on Jos. Campau.

A 23-year-old Detroit man was shot while outside the lounge in late December, which was the city's only homicide of the year.

The Police Department released a photo of two possible suspects.

To this date, no arrests have been made. Later in 2019, another shooting happened at the lounge. In August, two men were shot there, leading to one

of them later dying of their wounds.

There have been no arrests in that incident either.

City officials had enough, and closed down the lounge.

In January we got to

We still plan to stick around, much to the annoyance of certain folks!

In any case, we remain grateful to the community for its ongoing support and patronage.

The new year brought some changes in both the



**Jihan Aiyash is the first Yemeni-American woman to be elected to the Hamtramck Public School Board.**


crow a bit. The year was our 10-year anniversary of publishing.

It was a fun ride, we said, and we hoped to stick around for at least another 10 years, serving as the city's "official newspaper of record."

city government and the Hamtramck Public School Board.

Nothing major, though.

Pertaining to the city council, City Manager Kathy Angerer canceled work sessions that had been taking place an hour



**A second homicide at MyHookah Lounge prompted city officials to close it down.**

before the regular council meetings for the last three years.

Angerer told The Review that the reason she canceled the work meetings was that there was no longer a need.

"We will discuss matters in open session and on camera," she added.

Over at the school board, new member Jihan Aiyash was sworn in at the January board meeting.

She beat incumbent Ataur Khan in November's General Election. Khan initially decided not to seek re-election, which left an

open seat on the board, but then reconsidered, and waged a write-in campaign.

Aiyash was no stranger to the field of education. She is a graduate research assistant at Wayne State University.

The announced closing of GM's Poletown plant was probably the story of the year. The story went back and forth more than once, as city officials braced for a huge financial loss from the plant.

**Continued on page 2**



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Get Out on the Hamtown!

# Take a look back at 2019 in our first part of ‘Year in Review’

Continued from front page

Spoiler alert: GM ultimately reversed its decision, and the plant will remain in operation (but not for the next two years or so, as retooling takes place for the production of electric-fueled vehicles.

However, GM is going ahead with the closure of other plants, including one in Warren.

The new year started out with a frightful arctic dip in temperatures, to the point where the police department was asking folks to be on the lookout for the homeless.

It's a warning that still needs to be sounded:

If you see someone passed out on the ground, call 911 immediately.

But if you suspect someone is homeless and is stuck outside during severe cold snaps, call the Detroit Rescue Mission at (313)-993-4700. Volunteers will drive to wherever the person is, and then take them to a shelter.

## FEBRUARY

The city's Historical Com-

mission issued its annual report for the year 2018. In short, it was a year of tremendous growth.

Key capital improvements included: the installation of the “Coming to Hamtramck” mural, ceiling restoration on the first-floor gallery area, painting of the main gallery walls, start of restoration of the bathroom, and reconfiguration of the gallery floor space.

“Coming to Hamtramck” is a mural done by Hamtramck artist Dennis Orlovski. It measures 146 feet in length by 6 ½-feet in height, and is made up of 10 panels, each featur-

Survived, that is, the polar vortex that caused a historic deep freeze for the past few days.

How cold was it?

Temperature-wise, about minus 14 degrees, with windchills reaching about minus 30.

It was so cold (here in Hamtramck) that it was actually warmer at the South Pole – yes, the South Pole...

It was so cold the State of Michigan declared a state of emergency.

As if the bitter cold wasn't enough, there was more bad news for people braving the outside to walk

has been killed,” said one neighbor, who asked not to be identified.

Another neighbor, Angel Salatrik, said residents are “beyond frustrated, and are worried for the kids coming home from school, who have to cross the street.”

She added that “I wish the cops would sit on Brombach daily at 2:45 to 2:55 p.m. and give out tickets to these dangerous drivers.”

Some of the students even got aggressive with a Review reporter, pulling over and giving the reporter the finger.

Police Chief Anne Moise said at the time that her department was aware of the complaints.

“We have been monitoring the traffic situation on Brombach for quite some time, and try to have officers there during peak times as much as possible,” Police Chief Anne Moise told The Review.

Is there ever a time when city officials aren't fretting about money?

But this time around, City Manager Kathy Angerer had some alarming news.

Here is the short list of what was then looming ahead:

- Next year's budget will not include the federal grant that currently covers the salaries of firefighters. The city had received this grant for the last several years. Angerer said the city received \$575,000 for the 2018-19 budget year from this grant, but she noted that the amount changed from year to year.

Angerer said the city no longer qualifies for the grant because it is being changed to award cities with volunteer departments, or those that are adding additional employees.

- GM was expected to close its Poletown Plant, which would have meant a \$760,000 a year hit to the budget. (Looks like we dodged that bullet.)

- A long-standing Community Development Block Grant has been reformat- ted, which will result in a loss of \$100,000 per year that went to pay for code enforcement.

- In three years, Wayne County is expected to transfer prisoners from its Hamtramck jail to the new one being built in Detroit. The upshot: A loss of \$1.1 million a year.

- Over the next seven years, city employee payroll will increase by 7 percent, and the total cost of their health insurance will go up by 30 percent.

Continued on page 3



School and city officials teamed up to make our streets and crosswalks safer for pedestrians. One idea was to create 3-D crosswalks.

ing a prominent ethnic group that has immigrated to Hamtramck through the centuries: American Indian, French, German, Poles, African-Americans, Ukrainians, Albanians, Yeminis, Bosnians and Bangladeshis.

It was funded through a \$15,000 grant from the Michigan Humanities Council, and was formally dedicated in July at a ceremony attended by nearly 180 people.

When the Hamtramck Historical Commission was formed in 1998, it did not have a single document in its files.

In fact, there were no files.

Now, there are approximately 5,000 files covering people, places, events, ethnicity, immigration, crime, elections and a host of other topics. There is a reference to virtually every aspect of Hamtramck's history, and the archives are growing weekly as new files are added.

Also, there are an estimated 15,000 objects, ranging from pencils to wooden ice boxes, in the museum collection of items. This collection is also still growing, on a weekly basis.

Frigid temperatures lingered into February.

It was a polar vortex that crippled the operations of many businesses, and even government offices. This is what we had to say about it:

If you are reading this, you survived.

around town.

According to a national study on pedestrian safety, Michigan has some terrible drivers.

The “Dangerous by Design” report published by Smart Growth America says Michigan is the 19th-worst state when it comes to pedestrian safety.

While Hamtramck has not experienced a pedestrian death in years, every week we have several crashes, hit-and-runs, and, yes, instances of vehicles hitting pedestrians.

A number of years ago, a state insurance study ranked the intersection of Holbrook and Jos. Campau as one of the worst in the state for pedestrians.

The main cause for this is the distance from one corner to the other.

Basically, the light turns from red to green before many folks can get to the other side.

Students and cars, as we all know, can sometimes be a lethal mix.

We reported on what we called a daily ritual being played out in the neighborhood of Brombach near Evaline.

At about 3 p.m. some male students leaving Oakland International Academy High School hop in their cars and speed off down Brombach.

It was – and some say still is – a wild scene, with drivers squealing their tires, honking at each other, and even drag racing.

“I'm surprised no one

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# Second Front Page

## Take a look back at 2019 in our first part of ‘Year in Review’

Continued from page 2

• According to Angerer, if the city does not make adjustments to its budget, there will be an \$11 million deficit by 2023. The city’s annual budget is about \$16 million.

• On top of that, the city is always vulnerable to lawsuits and “other hidden costs,” Angerer said.

### MARCH

While many restaurants have come and gone in Hamtramck in recent times, there has been one constant for the past 20 years.

We talked with Maine Street Restaurant owners Nick and Mario Lulgjuraj about their success, and the impressive anniversary.

They have withstood all sorts of food trends that have been plated up in Hamtramck over the years.

Maine Street’s appeal is that it specializes in comfort foods, featuring classic American dishes as well as Greek favorites, the brothers said.

But what else is their secret to success?

“Hard work,” was the first thing that came to mind for Mario.

And to this day, they are still hard at work.

Despite a bitter cold day, Paczki Day was another success.

Back then, most of us thought, with Paczki Day arriving in early March (instead of February as it usually does), Old Man Winter might have been done with us.

Not so.

Instead, we suffered bitter cold temps, and with the wind-chill factored in, it ended up minus-some-

thing degrees.

But... paczki lovers persevered.

They stood for hours outside of the bakeries, as they usually do. They walked the streets, going from bar to bar.

They – or many of them – were either plain-old drunk, or suffering from paczki fever.



Paczki Day was bitterly cold, but that didn’t stop revelers from having fun.

But hey, this is Hamtramck’s own National Holiday. It’s our version of Mardi Gras, and everyone was feeling fine.

Next up, for our entertainment purposes, was the annual Hamtramck Music Fest.

The popular grass-roots festival once again featured hundreds of bands, DJs and performers being showcased in dozens of venues across the city.

The Hamtramck Public School District presented its annual financial picture and plans.

There was plenty of good news, and a little bad as well.

The bad?

Over the past 15 years, public school districts in the state have seen financial funding drop by 30 percent.

The good news is that the district still boasts of a budget surplus, this year sitting at \$9.8 million.

“We’re doing very well,” said District Chief Financial Officer Sherry Lynem at a gathering at the high school community center.

The district’s yearly budget is \$45 million, and so far, the district has

been able to keep costs down. Salaries and benefits eat up the biggest portion of the budget, at \$28 million.

But the president of the Hamtramck Public School Teachers’ Union, Michelle Cook, said per-pupil spending, which comes from the state, needs to be increased by a little over \$1,000 for each student.

The district now receives \$7,871 per student, Cook said.

In Hamtramck, the per-pupil dollar has to stretch much further.

That’s because the majority of students speak and read English as a second language, and also many are from low-income families.

That places more strain on teachers, and stretches the district’s resources.

To meet the district’s needs, Cook said, per

pupil spending should be at \$9,000.

Schools Superintendent Tom Niczay, who retired at the end of this school year, said he had been working with the city to find ways to further shore up the district’s financial picture by sharing services.

That way, he said, both the district and the city can save money.

He said the key to success is to remember that “We are all family.”

Hamtramck was on the verge of acquiring a major artifact of its history.

But thanks to officials at the Detroit Land Bank Authority, that plan was literally demolished.

There was a buzz around town that the Hamtramck Historical Commission was in line to acquire a log house, or to say more ac-

Continued on page 4

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**Tuesday, December 24**

Christmas Eve Vigil - Family Mass (English).....4:00 pm  
Solemn Midnight Mass - 12:00 am (English & Polish).....12 midnight  
(preceded by singing of Christmas carols at 11:30 pm)

**Wednesday, December 25**

Christmas Day, Mass in Polish & English .....9:30 am

**Wednesday, January 1**

New Year's Day - Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (English & Polish)9:30 am

**Saturday, January 4** - Mass (English) .....5:30 pm


**Sunday, January 5**

Epiphany of the Lord Mass .....English 8:00am, Polish 9:30 am  
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Quick Hits

Continued front page

world with an assortment of buttons, posters, bumper stickers or street signs.

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Tuesday, Dec. 24th

Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord  
9:00 a.m. Holy Mass  
11:30 p.m. - Christmas Carol Sing-a-Long  
12 Mid - Shepherds Mass (Pasterka)

Wednesday, Dec. 25th

Solemnity of Nativity of Our Lord  
9:00 a.m. - Holy Mass


Thursday, Dec. 26th:

Feast of St. Stephen, Proto Martyr  
10:00 a.m. Polish Holy Mass (Msza Św. w języku polskim)

Friday, Dec. 27th:

Feast of Saint John the Apostle  
10:00 a.m. - Holy Mass (Blessing of Wine)

~ Serving the Hamtramck Community ~



## Take a look back at 2019 in our first part of ‘Year in Review’

Continued from page 3

curately, a log house that had a distinct Hamtramck connection.

Greg Kowalski, the chairman of the Hamtramck Historical Commission, said this was no ordinary log house, because it dated back to some point in the 1800s, possibly as early as the 1830s.

And although it was actually located just a few blocks north of Hamtramck’s northern border with Detroit, on Halleck St., it was once Hamtramck’s own.

How so?  
In the 1800s, Hamtramck was a township, with larger boundaries. One border, for example, went all the way from this area to the Detroit River.

The log cabin style house was within the city’s boundaries in those days.

The plan was to move the cabin to Zussman



Some \$100,000 was raised through an online fundraiser for Hamtramck’s historic baseball stadium.

Park, where it would have been restored to its original glory.

Kowalski said a fundraiser was going to be held to raise \$60,000 to move and restore it.

But the Land Bank folks apparently grew impatient, and went ahead with their previous plan to raze it – despite earlier assurances to Kowalski it was going to be taken off the demolition list.

People in town were at historic levels of anger. You can say they had “hell-fire” in their blood, as they said back in the day (well, the mid-1800s day, anyway).

“Everybody is furious,” Kowalski said. “It was a shock, especially after all we had done.”

Mayor Karen Majewski took it one step further, and said: “Heads should roll.”

Spoiler alert: No one got fired.

It was out with the old, and in with a new turf at Keyworth Stadium.

Keyworth Stadium’s worn-out artificial turf was no more.

A work crew began tearing up the turf for disposal. It took a month to install a brand-new one.

The new turf was the re-

sult of an \$800,000 grant the public school district received from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

The old turf was way past its expiration date anyway. It was first installed about 20 years ago, and should have been replaced about 10 years after that.

It had long ago lost its spring when walking on it, and for players – especially the high school football team – it could feel as hard as packed dirt when they got tackled on it.

But, as they say, better late than never.

Hamtramck’s historic baseball stadium scored a big win.

An online fundraising goal of \$50,000 was met a week before the fundraiser was scheduled to end.

That \$50,000 raised was then doubled, thanks to a matching \$50,000 grant promised by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

The fundraiser was sponsored by both The Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium and the Piast Institute.

State marijuana sales were racking up millions in revenue.

But four city councilmembers, Anam Miah, Abu Musa, Saad Almas-mari and Fadel Al-Mar-soumi, were determined to keep Hamtramck out of that business.

They asked the city attorney to draft an ordinance that would allow Hamtramck to “opt out” of allowing recreational marijuana sales.

Without adopting that opt-out ordinance, the city could not prevent a certified sales outlet from operating.

Opposition to the sales came mostly from the Bengali and Yemeni communities. That opposition arrived late to the process of the city forming regulations on the sale and grow operations of medical marijuana.

However, that eventual proposal failed to pass, and to this day, city officials have not taken full action to opt in or opt out.

According to the Free Continued on page 5

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HAMTRAMCK

Review: Opinion Page

Take a look back at 2019 in our first part of ‘Year in Review’

Continued from page 4

Press, marijuana sales exceeded \$42 million in the first four months since the first retail outlets began operation.

That amount of sales in turn generated over \$3 million is sales tax for the state.

If Hamtramck opts out of sales, and of allowing production/grow facilities, it will lose out on income taxes, job creation and economic investment, proponents here say.

Opponents say the money is not worth it because they believe marijuana outlets will attract crime, and that marijuana will get into the hands of minors.

APRIL

Now that The Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium have secured funding to replace the turf at the city’s baseball stadium, how will the money be spent?

The Friends and the Piast Institute had just raised \$100,000 through online fundraising and a matching grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

This is the breakdown the Friends provided:

Landscaping and Hardscaping: \$15,000

Preparation of a new plaza at the main entrance to the grandstand, facing Dan St.

Educational & Interpretative Exhibits: \$33,000

Installation of outdoor exhibits in the new plaza, telling the story of Hamtramck Stadium, of the Negro Leagues in Detroit, of Hamtramck’s world championship youth baseball teams, and of the stadium’s connection to the African-American and Polish-American communities.

Field Restoration and Maintenance for 2019 season: \$24,000

Restoration of the playing field for baseball, soccer and cricket, plus field maintenance for the 2019 playing season (spring, summer, and fall). Includes a section of artificial turf be installed to cover the current concrete cricket pitch, which will make the pitch better for cricket, and less of an obstacle for



Organizers for Hamtown Farms announced they were closing down the community garden because of ongoing vandalism.

baseball and soccer.

Artwork: \$21,000  
Hamtramck Stadium streetlight banners for Jos. Campau and Dan St., plus large banners depicting the Detroit Stars and the 1959 Little League championship teams for the grandstand façade.

Signage and Wayfaring: \$7,000

“Welcome to Historic Hamtramck Stadium” sign for the grandstand façade, signage for self-guided tours, plus directional street signs at the major intersections on Hamtramck’s South Side.

The Holbrook repair project was back on the road.

The intersection at Holbrook and Gallagher was closed off, as workers tore up the street all the way to Conant.

The project was supposed to be completed in 2018, but both union road workers (Operating Engineers Local 324) and the contractors (the Michigan Infrastructure & Trans-

portation Association) went on strike for three months, which put the project way behind.

The project, costing \$1 million, was funded largely through the federal government – although the city kicked in 20 percent of the costs out of its yearly street repair fund.

The search for a new public school superintendent is ramping up next week.

Some 28 educators applied for the job, but the school board whittled that list down to six candidates to interview.

Interviews were set for later in the month.

Superintendent Tom Niczay was retiring after 40 years in education, the last 10 of which as superintendent.

Niczay became superintendent during a financial crisis when the district was millions of dollars in debt. He and his administration managed to climb out of it, and the district now has (and still has) a \$9.8 million budget surplus.

Niczay’s team also grew the district’s student population back up as well, and now boast of having over 3,000 students.

The district had seen a dramatic drop in students because of a dozen or so charter schools that popped up in the city, as

well as just outside the city in Detroit.

The district grew to the point that, a couple of years ago, it had to purchase a former charter school building on Hanley. Niczay’s last day was June 31.

Vandalism and its constant repair costs finally plowed under the beloved Hamtown Farms.

Michael Davis, a co-organizer of Hamtown Farms, a registered non-profit organization, announced the end of the garden on the Hamtown Farms Facebook page.

“We have some sad news to share. Unfortunately, due to a recent rash of vandalism and destruction (and seven years of continued vandalism and destruction), Hamtown Farms will be closing.

“We feel it is no longer prudent to continue to apply our money, time and effort, nor is right to ask others for their money, time and effort to support our mission of providing accessible green space for

the community.

“We thank everyone who, for the past seven years, has supported us in our efforts.”

Some of the damages over the years included people ruining trees, garden beds being destroyed, and the water collection system being vandalized.

Some familiar names entered this year’s city council race.

As expected, the three incumbents, Anam Miah, Abu Musa and Saad Al-masmari filed to seek reelection.

Former councilmember Mohammed Hassan and former city clerk Robert Zwolak were among the familiar challengers. Other candidates included Nayeem Choudhury, Carrie Beth Lasley, Mohammed Alsomiri and Justin Jessop.

A primary election was to be held in August, to whittle the nine candidates down to six.

After that, the top three vote-getters in the November General Election will

serve four-year terms.

The City of Hamtramck got hitched to a federal class action lawsuit regarding the towing practices of a Detroit company.

As previously reported in The Review, a lawsuit was filed in federal court regarding Breakthrough Towing.

The company first came to the attention of the public for towing cars from the CVS parking lot on Jos. Campau and Holbrook after the store closed for the day.

Patrons at Bumbo’s Bar, which is across the street from CVS, complained that Breakthrough targeted their cars, and then charged upwards of \$400 (in cash only) to give their cars back.

Although there were some parking signs posted by Breakthrough at the CVS lot, there was no contract with the company and CVS. And technically, the state’s signage law was not fully followed.

After The Review broke

Continued from page 6

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Continued from page 5

the story, the few parking signs that were posted were removed from the lot. Breakthrough was also accused of predatory towing at two locations in mid-town Detroit. The lawsuit accused CVS of being part of – or at least responsible for – the towing scheme. Also accused is the Hamtramck Police Department, for allowing the tow company to operate in town.

MAY

Thanks to a successful online fundraising campaign, the Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium had \$100,000 to spend on upgrades for the field and on other features. The stadium is one of only a handful left that hosted Negro League teams. Hamtramck Stadium was built in the 1930s. The Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium rolled out its plans at a press conference held at the Hamtramck Historical Museum. Those plans include:

Ripping out the current field and replacing it to accommodate not only baseball, but also soccer and cricket. The cost of maintenance for the 2019 season is also factored in. There are other stages of development planned, but those costs run as high as \$18 million.

This year’s city council election was all set to go. None of the nine candidates who filed dropped out of the race by the deadline day. Three incumbents, Anam Miah, Abu Musa and Saad Almasmari, were set to try to retain their seats. Their challengers were: Robert Zwolak, Nayeem Choudhury, Carrie Beth Lasley, Mohammed Hassan, Mohammed Alsomiri and Justin Jessop. They would face off in the Aug. 3 Primary Election. The top six finishers in that election moved on to the November Election. Spoiler alert: There were big changes in store.

The search for a new su-

perintendent for Hamtramck’s public schools was narrowed down to two candidates. Dr. Youssef Mosallam and Jaleelah Ahmed made the final cut, after the board interviewed a total of six candidates. Mosallam was the Executive Director of Community Partnerships, College & Career Readiness Achievement for the Dearborn Public Schools. Ahmed was the Director for English Language Development with the Hamtramck Public Schools. The vote to whittle down the candidates to two finalists was initially splintered, but once there was an agreement, with a bare majority of the vote, the board was unanimous in moving forward with the final two candidates for further consideration. A few weeks later, in an emotional and packed special school board meeting, a divided board voted to hire Ahmed. Technically, the vote was to allow contract negotiations to begin with Ahmed, a Yemeni-American, who has worked in the Hamtramck district for three years.

“Banglatown” got a huge injection of funding. American Axle & Manufacturing said it will invest \$5 million into the neighborhood known as Banglatown. That neighborhood is just east – and a little north – of Hamtramck, and runs between Jos. Campau and Conant, starting at about Carpenter. The neighborhood also blurs into part of Hamtramck, on the northeast corner of the city. However, the investment is being aimed at the Detroit side of the Hamtramck border. The five-year plan for American Axle, which is being directed by the Detroit Strategic Neighbor-

hood Fund, calls for a number of improvements, including: razing dilapidated houses and buildings, continued improvements in Jayne Field, renovating housing and storefronts, and making Conant and Jos. Campau more pedestrian friendly.



Old-timey baseball became a feature at the Hamtramck Baseball Stadium.

The investment got a boost by the Hamtramck City Council when the council approved having the University of Michigan perform a study of the area, with an eye toward finding out what other improvements can be made on the Hamtramck side. Even though there was a budget crunch for the city, alley repairs were slated to continue.

The city initially was only going to complete alley repairs that were left over from last year’s funding. But despite having to dip into the city budget surplus by \$1.8 million this year to make ends meet, the city council decided to add \$200,000 to the budget to keep the alley project going. Mayor Karen Majewski said she didn’t want to see the gains made in capital improvements come to a halt. Councilmember Anam Miah agreed, saying, “If we don’t address it, the burden is going to be on someone.”

Bits and pieces of Hamtramck’s history came to light, thanks to an archeo-

logical dig by Wayne State University students. The items were collected at the site where the log cabin on Halleck St. (once a part of the larger area called Hamtramck Township) was unceremoniously razed by the Detroit Development Authority some

months earlier. The items were catalogued by the WSU students, and now are in the collection of the Hamtramck Historical Museum.

A perfect storm of financial setbacks forced city officials to raid the city’s budget surplus. City officials passed a budget for the new fiscal year that included (for the first time in several years) going into deficit spending – for a total of \$2.1 million. But fortunately, the city had a budget cushion of \$6 million to absorb the hit. The city’s total budget is \$17 million. Almost half of that is spent on police and fire services.

JUNE

If you were feeling stressed this year, well, there are reasons why. It came as no surprise to the folks at Zippia. The job finder website compiled a list of most-stressed American cities and states, presumably to make it easier for would-be job seekers to come prepared.

Hamtramck had the dubious honor or topping the local list. What did Zippia think was stressing us? The folks at Zippia used six factors to create their list: Unemployment; for those who do work, hours worked; commute times; percent of population uninsured; population density; and lastly, house-price-to-income ratio. They didn’t even bring up the subject of chairs in the street to try to claim those precious street-parking spaces. Other factors played into our local stress as well, according to a follow-up piece from Clickondetroit.com: The price of housing itself was mentioned as a major stress source. The bad news? The price of housing keeps going up and up and up.

Try to chill, folks. City council candidates learned a valuable lesson: Make sure you are up to date on your property taxes and water bills by election day. That was part of the message that attorneys for the Miller Law Firm offered in a 10-page legal opinion regarding whether Councilmember Saad Almasmari, who was seeking another term, was a “defaulter” to the city. The matter came up when fellow council candidate Carrie Beth Lasley filed a complaint with the city over Almasmari falling behind on property taxes and water bills. She insisted that Almasmari should have been removed from the August Primary Election ballot, and also that criminal charges should have been considered. According to the law firm attorneys who were hired by the city to look into the issue, an elected official

Continued on page 7

Obituaries

DOBROGOST

Helen Dobrogost (nee Gorgon), 100, died December 6, 2019. Mrs. Dobrogost was the wife of the late Paul; dear friend of Mary and Ted Justice and her “adopted”, grandchildren, Kaila, Carrie, Frank, Joseph and Dawn Gravat. Entombment was Monday, December 9, 2019, at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Detroit, MI. Arrangements were entrusted to Jurkiewicz & Wilk Funeral Home.

LAFATA

Stella Lafata (nee Suwinski), 93, died December 17, 2019. Mrs. Lafata was the wife of the late Salvatore; stepmother of Michael; aunt of Michael and James Suwinski. Mrs. Lafata’s funeral Mass was Saturday, December 21, 2019 at St. Ladislaus Catholic Church. Private cremation followed, with burial at Pahrump Community Cemetery, Pahrump, Nevada. Arrangements were entrusted to Jurkiewicz & Wilk Funeral Home.

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Continued from page 6

can only be considered a defaulter on election day, when the ballots are counted.

Almasmari previously told The Review he freely admits to having personal financial problems. He has often fallen behind on tax and water bills during his term in office.

Spoiler alert: Both Almasmari and Lasley would lose their bids to win seats on city council.

City and school officials took a bold – and innovative – step forward in improving pedestrian safety.

In a joint meeting of the common council and the board of education, the two local public bodies unanimously approved a pilot project to install 3D crosswalks at four intersections along the Gallagher corridor.

The intersections targeted were, from north to south, at Casmere, Caniff, Evaline and Holbrook. Gallagher was chosen for the collaborative pilot program because it connects three

public schools – Hamtramck High, Dickinson East and Tau Beta – and is heavily used by pedestrians on their way to and from restaurants and markets on Caniff and Holbrook.

The implementation of the 3-D design was thought to be the first of its kind in Michigan. The crosswalk designs have been popping up across heavily-populated cities in central and south Asia, where fatal crashes between motorists and pedestrians are among the highest in the world.

So what is a 3-D design? The crosswalks appear to be raised above the ground, an illusory effect that signals to motorists that they are approaching a pedestrian crossing.

According to state law, people using crosswalks have the right of way to cross there and motorists must yield or stop for them.

Signage alerting drivers to the law are usually in-

Continued on page 8



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Continued from page 7

stalled in tandem with the crosswalks.

The cost of the project was not to exceed \$25,000 and included a \$12,500 contribution from the school district and \$12,500 from the city.

The bad news? It never happened because of a problem in getting a contract to do the work. But the project is still scheduled to move forward.

In Hamtramck, it's one step back for every two steps forward.

Getting around in Hamtramck was a challenge this past spring.

DTE Energy crews were seen everywhere in Hamtramck.

They were busy digging up city streets to install new gas lines.

In a number of instances, it meant tying up major intersections, much to the annoyance of drivers and pedestrians.

The work was expected to be completed by late November.

OK, you can have a good laugh about that.

Why? Because DTE crews are still tying up streets, and worse, have so far failed to replace sidewalk slabs that had to be torn up.

The city was one of 10 communities getting a full upgrade. Eventually, cities throughout the entire state will receive the same treatment, at a total cost of \$3.5 billion to DTE.

In Hamtramck alone, the cost amounted to \$15 million, which translated into 14-16 miles worth of new lines.

The old lines had been there for about 40 years, and as one DTE crew member told The Review, this resulted in frequent breakdowns and interruptions to service.

The Hamtramck Public School District employees said their goodbyes to retiring Superintendent Tom Niczay.

Niczay had been the superintendent of the district for 11 years, and spent a

total of 41 years in education – most of it in Hamtramck.

The employees gathered one afternoon at the newly-remodeled kitchen in Kosciuszko Middle School before the monthly school board meeting took place.

Niczay became superintendent after a string of prior superintendents had little luck in getting along with school boardmembers and district staff members.

He also came on board when the district was going through rocky financial times. The district at one point had a \$5 million budget deficit. Today, the district boasts of an \$11 million surplus.

Niczay touched on that at the gathering, crediting district staff and employees with helping to turn the district's finances around.

“We're far from perfect, but we truly care about each other,” Niczay said at the reception held for him.

Later at the board meeting, Board President Mag-

dalena Srodek praised Niczay's leadership.

“What this man has done for the district is immeasurable,” she said., “You live and breathe Hamtramck schools. You just can't retire from being awesome.”

Concern grew over the safety of local taxi drivers, following the fatal shooting of a local Bengali-American driver.

About 50 members of the Bengali community met one evening at Aladdin Restaurant with Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon and Detroit police officials.

Hamtramck resident Joynul Islam, 60, was shot and killed in his taxi while dropping off a passenger in Detroit. He worked for Checker Cab, as do many in the local Bengali community.

Apparently, the passenger refused to pay, and an argument broke out. Islam was then shot. The suspect was later arrested.

Islam left behind a wife

and seven children.

The organizer of the meeting, Dr. Nazmul Hassan hoped the get-together would be the beginning of a “dialogue” with public safety officials.

“When they (taxi drivers) go out, they don't know if they will come home safely,” Hassan said.

Many of the drivers, he added, are the “sole bread winners” for their families.

One of the key problems, said one community member, is the number of illegal guns in the city.

“Control guns, and save our lives,” the speaker said.

A recycling program returned with the new sanitation contract.

City officials hired Priority Waste Holdings to take over the pick-up of residential garbage. Included in the contract was a recycling service for residents.

The recycling bins are located just east of Conant at 3900 Christopher St.

“This is an exciting opportunity, because we will

no longer have to save our recyclable materials in our kitchens and garages for a month; we can go to drop off plastic and paper anytime that is convenient” said Recycling Commission member Sarah Terrien, in a city-issued press release.

Mayor Karen Majewski added, “We are grateful for the support of the commission, students and our volunteers who assisted in making this transition from the monthly drop off, to this new location in our city, a success.”

The public can drop off the following items: paper, cardboard, and #1 and #2 plastics.

Well, that's it for the first six months of 2019.

What a year it shaped up to be.

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There are only 150 tickets available and are sold on a first come, first serve basis.

For advance tickets, contact Ken Koliba at 586-549-5448 or kenneth.koliba@aol.com

### Hamtramck Public Library

Events & Programs

January 2020

#### Toddler Time

Thursdays

11:30 am- 12:30 pm

Begins January 9

Children up to age 5 and their parents and caregivers are invited for stories & songs followed by playtime.

#### Parent Hub & Grub

Wednesday, January 15

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Real talk on resources for programs supporting families

Guest presenter Great Start Wayne offers this free lunch program!

Childcare provided.

For information and to register:

313-410-4588

#### Movie Night

Tuesdays @ 4:00 pm

Begins January 7

Family Friendly Movies  
Snacks Provided

#### Building Club

Wednesdays

3:30 - 4:45 pm

1/8, 1/15, 1/22

Drop-in for unstructured, creative play. Ages 3 and up.

Try out the library's new STEAM materials: Lego, zoob, megablocks & more!

#### Homework Help & SAT Test Prep

Fridays, 3-5 pm

Begins January 10

Local DECA students will be offering free homework help and SAT preparation

Call the library to sign up!



Hamtramck Public Library

2360 Caniff Ave., Hamtramck MI 48212 313-733-6822 hamtramck.lib.mi.us

## BROWN BAG BOOK CLUB

Like to read books?

Like to talk about books?

Join us!

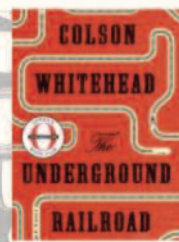
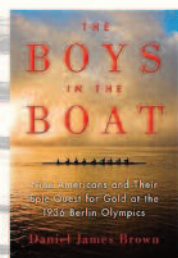
"The Boys in the Boat"

by

Daniel J. Brown

Friday, January 10

@ 12:00 pm



"The Underground Railroad"

by

Colson Whitehead

Friday, February 7

@ 12:00 pm

Coffee & Tea provided

Sponsored by the Friends of the Hamtramck Public Library

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