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Volume 13 No. 2
January 8, 2021
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The Review

Hamtramck

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Quick Hits

No, the Post Office is not closing

By Charles Sercombe

For a moment this past week, some on social media were freaking out about the Hamtramck Post Office branch.

It started when mailboxes were removed, an act which some thought was done under mysterious circumstances.

Turns out it wasn't much of a mystery.

A driver crashed into them. One box was replaced on Tuesday and another, a drive-up box (called a "snorkel"), will soon be installed.

But concern didn't stop there.

The sudden removal of the boxes prompted some folks to spread unfounded rumors that it meant the branch office was being closed.

Not true at all.

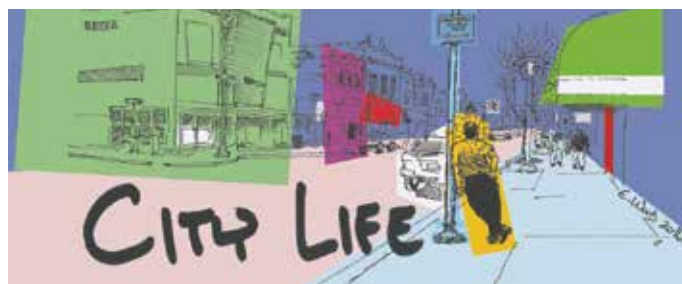
The Review contacted the Detroit Postmaster General's Office, and we received this email:

"There is no truth to the rumor the Hamtramck Post Office is closing," said Elizabeth Najdich, a spokesperson for the office.

But there is still a problem, Mayor Karen Majewski said in her weekly Facebook address to the

Continued on page 5

— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —



City Life: 2020 was a year of big ideas, new challenges

By Walter Wasacz

Health, both personal and community, was the dominant theme of City Life in 2020.

First, the personal: a year ago January I was in recovery from unexpected eye surgery. I'd somehow detached my retina while traveling in Europe in November and December. I experienced some fuzzy vision, felt as if some foreign body, a strand of hair perhaps, was laying atop the surface of my left eye.

There was no pain, but limited vision made it difficult to dodge intense bicycle traffic while walking in Berlin and Amsterdam.

It's hard to imagine this if you'd never been to densely-populated cities where pedestrians and bicycles are as commonplace as motor vehicles, often competing for the same urban spaces.

On the plane ride back to Detroit, the cabin was filled with people clearing their throats and coughing. My thoughts then were not on my vision: rather my concerns were more about being exposed to the flu or some other bug.

Little did I know then that a novel coronavirus was on the move from China to Europe and eventually to the U.S.

My full recovery from reattachment surgery took months, until March,

around the time that Covid-19 had officially become a global pandemic and was beginning to infect people closer to home.

I had a sense that public health and the social and economic impact of virulent infectious disease were to be the stories of 2020, that "normal" life in even small cities like Hamtramck was to be challenged by a virus. Nothing else was more important.

Nothing even close.

So I dedicated my column to this evolving story, choosing to insert myself (more than I usually do) into the narrative as a way to model what I believed (and still do) was sound personal and community health practice.

In March, I wrote that I had begun self-quarantining at my house, only going out for essentials (food, medicine) and keeping physically active with solo walks around my increasingly depopulated neighborhood.

I was asymptomatic but have had some recent history of respiratory illness, requiring a trip to the ER in 2018 for an acute asthma episode and bronchial infection. After returning from Europe, I also had a flu earlier that produced fever and chills over a two-week period.

As of March, I was feel-

Continued on page 2



Activists from the Bangladeshi community and others marched in protest of the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis



Inspirational murals in Cleveland's revitalized Detroit Shoreway district offer a message of unity and hope. The neighborhood has an early-20th century history similar to Hamtramck's



Sign on the fence at Oloman Cafe anticipates a proposed path for a stretch of the Joe Louis Greenway from Holbrook to Caniff



Springtime blooms brought color to solo safe distancing walks

City seeks public input on parks

By Charles Sercombe

The city's next five-year parks and recreation plan is in the hands of the public.

The city is seeking public input on a proposed five-year Master Plan for parks and recreation.

An 18-page outline of the proposed plan is available to review online at the city's website.

It's a comprehensive wish list that requires hundreds of thousands of dollars to make happen.

The sources of that money is not guaranteed, but the city is always seeking government and private grants.

The city has six parks, all in various stages of development. The largest park is Veterans Memorial Park, located off of Jos. Campau Ave. in the southend.

It encompasses 26 acres and includes the city's historic baseball stadium.

There is one more park, Pulaski Park, which is owned by the public school district. That park is not included in this proposed plan.

Some of the proposed plans include:

- Sarah Garrett Park
- Installation of a monument commemorating the Sarah Sims Garrett Discrimination Case
- Planting of wildflowers
- Salaam Peace Park
- Install permeable pavers
- Plant trees
- Install benches
- Install playscapes
- Install fencing

Holbrook Gardens Park

Continued on page 3

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ডবিনোদন কেন্দ্র
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হ্যামট্রামিক সিনিয়র প্লাজা

২৬২০ হলব্রুক স্ট্রীট, হ্যামট্রামিক ড ৩১৩ ৮৭৩ ৭৭৮৭

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City Life: 2020 was a year of big ideas, new challenges

Continued from front page

ing good and presumed healthy, but acting under an abundance of caution.

I wrote then that Hamtramck relies heavily on keeping community life active, its bars and restaurants open and flowing with customers. But that our already fragile, grass-roots economy was in for some real pain in the coming months.

Public health experts I trusted were saying the duration of the health crisis might last 18 months or longer.

This dire prediction was sadly accurate.

The following month I began my column by noting that I'd spent the previous 40 days in self-quarantine.

I had not been close to another human – but for a few careful trips to markets and the pharmacy, curbside pickups at restaurants, and the occasional nods from masked strangers from a distance the width of a street – since early March.

This kind of quarantine does not mean complete isolation, I wrote, meaning being trapped within four walls, never leaving the house. It meant keeping safe distance from possible transmission of a virus so contagious and potentially deadly it can be spread invisibly through a cough, a sneeze, even by breathing the same air as those infected, whether they were showing symp-

toms or not.

It meant, in this time of worldwide medical crisis, avoidance of other people, the cessation of normal person to person contact. Yes, it was a sacrifice, but one that was doable and necessary.

I wrote that this virus was a uniquely mobile and efficient transmitter. It was essential that we respected the range of its attack capabilities. To say we must approach this pandemic as if we are on war footing was chillingly accurate.

The best way of attacking the threat was to not become exposed, period. And to remain physically and mentally healthy. Deceptively simplistic advice, sure, but that is the only defense we currently have until a vaccine was to be produced and distributed (note: vaccines have been produced and plans are for them to be distributed in phases throughout 2021).

My way has been through mobile meditation, walking twice daily - usually one long, two-hour walk in the morning and another 45 minutes to an hour around sunset.

In April, I logged 4.6 miles each day, exactly double what I did in March (2.3 miles). I circumnavigated Hamtramck many times, traversing its network of alleys, exploring the industrial edges of the city on its southern and western borders, jumping railroad tracks into Detroit and Highland Park.

I usually saw no one on my treks to the deserted

outer bands of the city and across the borders.

One morning I walked east on Caniff to Mt. Elliott, about an hour later finding myself alongside the old Chrysler-Plymouth Lynch Road plant, where

Another day I circled Hamtramck Drive and crossed the bridge on Grand Blvd, looking down at Milwaukee Junction, before heading north on Russell St. to Holbrook. On another, I walked across I-75



A walk to Detroit's rapidly redeveloping North End neighborhood just west of I-75 featured this construction inspired by Islamic art and design



A new mural was unveiled in the west Jos. Campau alley at Edwin St.

my mother worked from 1948 to 1960, and for which I have sentimental attachments.

I saw no one except for a cyclist approaching me on the bridge that spanned over the tracks to Mound Road. The passage is so narrow that I walked back to where I came to avoid sharing air space with this person.

Normally, I would have walked on through. But on this walk I practiced strict avoidance.

Continued on page 4

This week at the Library . . .

New Member of the Library Board of Directors: We would like to introduce the newest member of the Library Board, Layla Alsharif.



She has been recently appointed to that position of the Mayor, Honorable Karen Majewski, Ph.D. She is an immigrant from Yemen. Her family arrived to Hamtramck few years ago. She has been a long standing patron of our library and has library work experience. We would like to congratulate her on the appointment and thank her for the service to the community.

Monthly Meeting of Library Board: The next meeting of the Library Board will be held on Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 6:00

For more information about events at the library call (313) 733-6822
Or visit its website at <http://hamtramck.lib.mi.us>
When you can also access the online catalog.
The library is located at 2360 Caniff Avenue.

pm. in the library's main hall. Meeting is open to the public, masks required and distancing strictly enforced.

Hamtramck Library is operating as “Grab and Go” until further notice: - This service includes book pick-ups, remote printing, faxing and scanning. Computers will not be available for use until further notice. Please send attachments you want printed to hamtramcklibrary@gmail.com.

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Don't forget Hoopla (on our website under “eResources”) to find and download e-books and to stream movies and music. Don't forget all the great resources available on Michigan eLibrary (MEL) for students: Britannica Kids, PebbleGo, and World Book Kids. For adults: books, audio and video for learning and entertainment.

Second Front Page

Mayor: COVID continues to spread in the new year

By Charles Sercombe

It maybe a new year, but it's the same old news when it comes to Mayor Karen Majewski's weekly Facebook address to the community.

COVID-19 continues to infect residents – and kill them.

The Review dedicated the last two weeks to our annual Year in Review, so there has been no update in the paper about the mayor's weekly reports.

While the paper was on break, the mayor continued her weekly talks.

When we last left off, there were just over 1,500 cases and 32 deaths reported for the year thus far.

Flash forward to this past Monday, and the number of cases jumped up to 1,691.

And in the last week, there were three new deaths reported in Hamtramck for a new total of 36.

Last week's victims included a 71-year-old woman, and two men, 65 and 59.

The pandemic also continues to rage in the metro area, as well as nationally.

One of the COVID victims in the metro area was Dearborn Heights Mayor Dan Paletko, Majewski noted. She said that Paletko was no stranger to Hamtramck, having been a past Grand Marshal of the Polish Day Parade, which is held annually in Hamtramck on Labor Day.

Well, the parade is normally held here annually – except for this past year, when it was canceled due to COVID.

The pandemic is also forcing many government offices to be closed off to the public, and that still includes Hamtramck City Hall.

Although the public can't come into the build-

ing, a skeleton staff is still reporting to work, the mayor said, and you can take care of a lot business either online, or through a DivDat machine the lobby of city hall.

In other words, you still have to pay your bills owed to the city.

Majewski noted that a second federal stimulus check for \$600 per person is being issued, and that federal unemployment has been extended.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer also announced a new round of grants aimed at small businesses and entertainment venues, of which Hamtramck has several.

Another hot topic in the city has been the fate of the Caniff Ave. post office branch.

Last week, the mailboxes in front of the building were removed, which prompted rumors that the branch was closing.

Not so, said Majewski.

Instead, the mailboxes were removed because a driver crashed into them. One of the boxes was replaced on Tuesday.

The branch has closed its doors during normal business hours because there has been a problem with staffing, Majewski said. You can blame that on COVID, which has taken its toll on a number of postal employees.

Majewski urged patience.

"Their employees are sick," she said.

Majewski ended on notes of both bewilderment and hope.

"It's 2021 – who in the world could imagine this is where we would be?" she said.

Majewski added that the past year "has been teaching us a lot about ourselves.

She said we should all use these lessons "to set our house right," and to "be more loving ... and make the community safer."

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City seeks public input on parks

Continued from front page

- Create development plan
- Beautification of public space
- Residential street tree plantings
- Priorities based on Davey Resource Group Hamtramck Tree Survey
- Joseph Campau flower beds
- In coordination with the Downtown Development Authority, plant and

maintain the flower beds in our downtown district

- Improve connectivity of non-motorized transportation
- Hamtramck will complete its part of the Joe Louis Greenway
- Construction of bike lanes on Joseph Campau
- Enhance alleyway on west side of Joseph Campau to become a pedestrian walk and bikeway

• Install bike racks at various parks around the city

- Join a regional ride-sharing program
- MoGo Bikes

The public comment period started on Dec. 24, and runs for 30 days.

Comments can be sent, via email, to:

ccopp@hamtramckcity.com

Cosmos winter sports schedule		
WEEK 1		
January 25 –Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Taylor Prep.		Home. 6 p.m.
January 25 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Taylor Prep.		Home. 7:30 p.m.
January 27 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Ecorse.		Away. 5:30 p.m.
January 27 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Ecorse.		Away. 7 p.m.
January 29 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Catholic Central.		Home. 7 p.m.
WEEK 2		
February 1 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Harper Woods.		Home. 5:30 p.m.
February 1 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Harper Woods.		Home. 7 p.m.
February 3 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. UPAD.		Home. 7 p.m.
February 5 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Trillium.		Home. 7 p.m.
WEEK 3		
February 8 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. River Rouge.		Away. 5:30 p.m.
February 8 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. River Rouge.		Away. 7 p.m.
February 10 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. UPSM.		Home. 5:30 p.m.
February 10 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. UPSM.		Home. 7 p.m.
February 12 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. UPA.		Away. 5:30 p.m.
February 12 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. UPA.		Away. 7 p.m.
WEEK 4		
February 15 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Taylor Prep.		Away. 6 p.m.
February 15 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Taylor Prep.		Away. 7:30 p.m.
February 17 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Ecorse.		Home. 5:30 p.m.
February 17 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Ecorse.		Home. 7 p.m.
February 19 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Dearborn HFA.		Home. 6 p.m.
WEEK 5		
February 22 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Harper Woods.		Away. 5:30 p.m.
February 22 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Harper Woods.		Away. 7 p.m.
February 24 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. UPAD.		Home. 7 p.m.
February 26 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. Trillium.		Away. 7 p.m.
February 26 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. Fitzgerald.		Home. 6 p.m.
WEEK 6		
March 1 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. River Rouge.		Home. 5:30 p.m.
March 1 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. River Rouge.		Home. 7 p.m.
March 3 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. UPSM.		Away. 5:30 p.m.
March 3 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. UPSM.		Away. 7 p.m.
March 5 – Varsity Girls’ Basketball vs. UPA.		Home. 5:30 p.m.
March 5 – Varsity Boys’ Basketball vs. UPA.		Home. 7 p.m.



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City Life: 2020 was a year of big ideas, new challenges

vivid colors (pink, blue, purple, yellow, orange, green), neighborhoods that – if I blinked once or twice – look exactly, with the exception of some paint peeling or cakes of rust showing, like they did when I first began exploring them at age 11.

I returned to Veterans Park countless times, imagining how it will look when the old Negro Leagues stadium is fully restored, a significant project that matters not only on a local level, but has garnered attention from the Detroit Tigers and other national interests.

At the front of the park is a plaque memorializing Horace and John Dodge. In 1910, the brothers established the factory on the city's south end that attracted jobseekers from Eastern Europe and the American south, producing a high-quality fleet of military vehicles used extensively during World War I, spurring rapid growth in the economy of Hamtramck (then still a village) and causing a huge spike in population.

Sadly, as if speaking through a portal connecting time and space, the

plaque reads that the Dodge Brothers were exposed during the last great viral epidemic of the past century, which began in 1918 and lasted two years. John died of complications of influenza in January 1920; Horace initially recovered but died later the same year.

Their lives and deaths bring a stark perspective to our current medical crisis. None of us, rich or poor, are immune.

—

In May I wrote that my time in self-quarantine had edged towards 60 days,

and that my circumnavigation of the city on foot had accelerated. I was doing two solo, masked walks each day, one in the morning, the other in the evening.

I was barely recognizable, I wrote, a mere shadow passing in the bright light and muted twilight. I talked to no one, only waving in solidarity should I chance upon others in the streets or in their yards as I glided through the alleys (my preferred routes).

There was no better way to outpace the Covid-19 pandemic than to stay out

of range of exposure. That meant no contact with people - a luxury many were not able to enjoy.

I lived alone, and could go indefinitely without getting close to other humans. I checked that privilege each time I would go out, and when I came back and sat down at my computer to write or work on the pictures I shot by the hundreds each day.

My commitment was to serious independent documentary work, not a trifle, while placing high value on my health and the health of the community in which we live.

When I was out I did not stop. I did not shop. I carried no money. I wore gloves, touching nothing except my camera.

My mind flexed, opening wider on these walks. Thoughts slowed down and became more clear: focus sharpened, memories, images and stories began developing.

I welcomed them all.

I usually began to notice a change in mental activity at about two miles, or roughly 30 minutes after I started out.

To friends, I described my walks as silent mobile meditation sessions, unscripted and without predestination. I didn't know where I was going but I knew how to get there was my odd way of putting it, but accurate.

I've written numerous times about my hyper-familiarity with Hamtramck and Detroit neighborhoods which border it.

I used that embedded knowledge to guide me more than conventional mapping strategies that suggested "left" at the next stop sign, "right" at the traffic light beyond that, and so on.

I walked to the Fisher Building, a one-way hike of about three miles. On the way back I cut through Palister St., which was closed to motor traffic a few decades back. That was unplanned. This lovely street simply availed itself as an opportunity for access and I took it, knowing the other side would bring me to Detroit's main artery, Woodward Avenue.

I cut through empty streets in the North End, a

Continued from page 2

neighborhood directly adjacent to Hamtramck on its western border (take Holbrook west of I-75 and you are there), to Euclid St.

It is here, just east of Oakland Avenue, that an Islamic art-inspired community project is rising, and several urban farming initiatives have replaced disused, vacant spaces.

On my walks I was fully engaged in the present, although the past - Hamtramck's and in Detroit neighborhoods on its periphery - was never far away. Experiencing all of it closeup on foot, with intimacy and respect, revealed this in ways that other modes of transportation simply cannot.

—

A significant change came later that same month. In April, I met a woman who lives in Cleveland and began what was initially a virtual, long-distance relationship.

For weeks we chatted on text, voice and video. Convinced we were each successful in keeping social distance independently we thought it safe to create a new bubble together.


In late May, Robin drove to Hamtramck, where we got to know each other in person for a few days. She invited me to join her on a cross-country trek to Southern California where she has a home.

I mulled it over and decided that I was up for the adventure, confident that our individual experiences in keeping safe distance could be combined into a two-person pod (later, this was to include members of her family).


We took Robin's van, which had a cabin large enough to hold a full-size mattress, and began driving south from Hamtramck, through Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, before we stopped several miles east of the Missouri border to rest for the night.

A few hours later we were back on the road, passing through St. Louis (in the rain, unfortunately, I could only make out the famed Gateway Arch in the falling mist), before continuing on through Tulsa and Oklahoma City, finally landing a hotel room in

Continued on page 6



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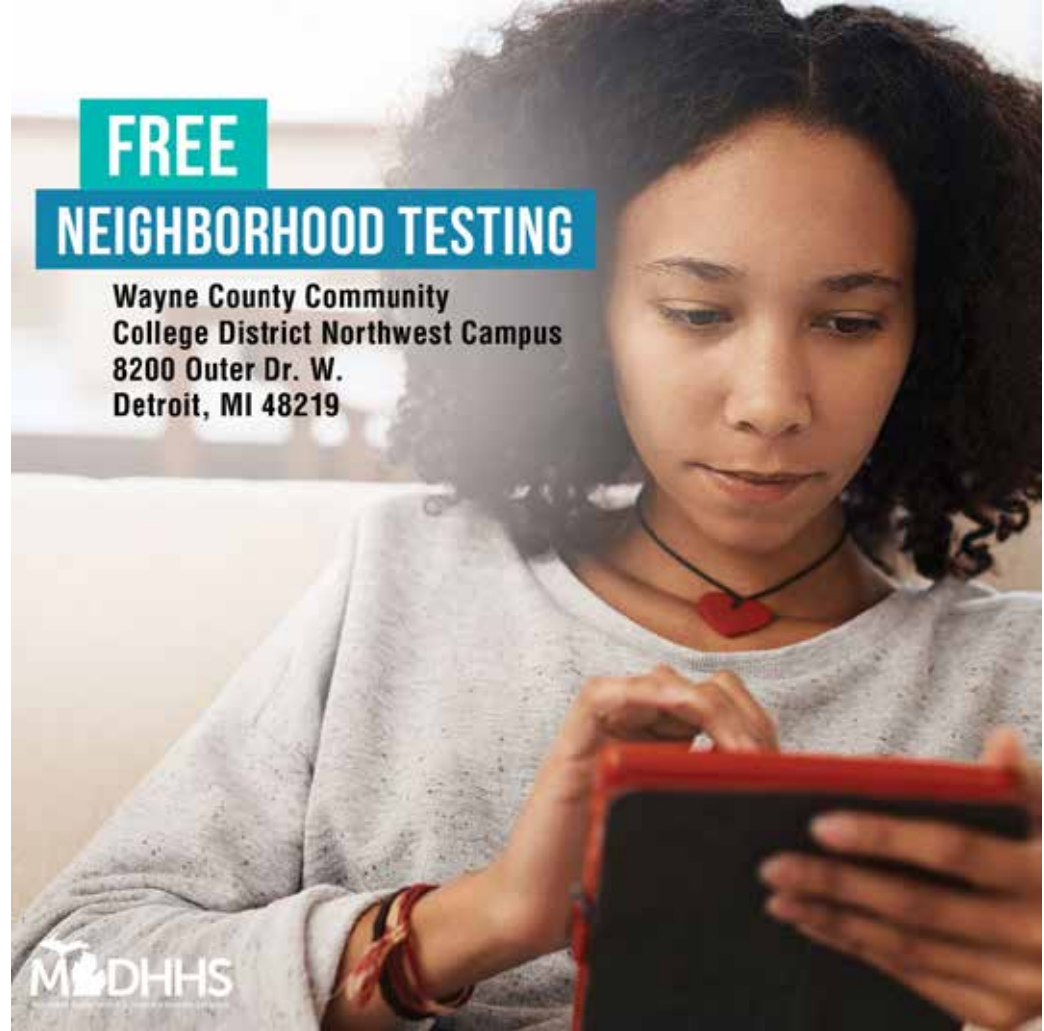
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Review: Opinion Page

In Our Opinion

With 2020 behind us, now is the time to unite

We can all agree that we're glad to see the year 2020 end. Obviously COVID played a huge part in our lives. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like it will go away any time soon. The past year also saw some disturbing divisions among elected officials here. There appears to be an ever-widening cultural divide in the city between progressives and social conservatives. This division could be seen in the debate about allowing recreational marijuana sales outlets. Hamtramck politics has always been brutal, but it appears this is going to be a bitter election year. On top of that, the city's finances continue to tank, as more money is being spent than is being collected. We expect this will play a huge role in what direction the city takes in the next several months.

But for now, we always start the new year with optimism. The community does traditionally unite when there is great need for solidarity. The Review, of course, could not exist without the community's ongoing support. For that, we are thankful. We look forward to another year of serving you all. Hamtramck may be a small city, but it always produces tons of fascinating news stories. Stay optimistic, folks.

Odds & Ends

Cleaning up... The city means business when it comes to litter and garbage control. Households will be receiving a sticker this week that explains and illustrates how to handle your city-issued garbage cans and what not to do. One of the more common issues is that households pile on loose trash on top of their cans or next to them. Don't do that. That is how we get rats. Also, your garbage can is not meant to stay out in the alley permanently. You can place it in the alley the night before your pickup date, but then after your garbage is collected, you are required to take the can back into your yard. It's as simple as that. The stickers come with garbage do's and don'ts in three languages: English, Arabic and Bengali. If these instructions are not followed, the city will begin to issue tickets to households.

Reminder... The governor's office has partnered with the Michigan Dept. of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to allow people on food stamps to use their Bridge Cards at restaurants. But, caution, not everyone will be eligible for this program. So, who will?

Adults over 60 years old; person with a disability, including those who get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other disability program benefits; and people who are experiencing homelessness, are among those who will be eligible. Nor will every restaurant be participating. More on that in a moment. The program is dubbed the Restaurant Meal Program, or RMP. Restaurants have been able to enroll since Dec. 22 at the MDHHS website. MDHHS will announce, at a later date, when recipients can begin using their benefits at restaurants.

Quick Hits

Cont. from front page

community on Monday. The spread of COVID has hit postal employees, as well as over 20 millions of other Americans, making staffing at the Caniff Ave. branch iffy. The office has closed suddenly on multiple occasions during normal business hours, simply because the postal service can't get employees to staff the office. This has actually affected postal operations across the nation, and has also caused delays in delivering the mail. The issue also reminded some of a threat to close the branch office back in 2005. A resident-led group lobbied the postal service then, and the office was spared.

MDHHS also will publish a list of participating restaurants on their website. That list is likely to grow, shrink or otherwise change over time, so keep checking in with the website periodically. Restaurants must offer meals at "concessional prices"; this is presumably to prevent the establishments from price gouging the state.

Other Voices: Guest Editorial

A message from the school district Superintendent

By Jaleelah Ahmed
Superintendent
Hamtramck Public Schools

With 2020 now behind us, I want to take a moment to reflect. The past year was a challenging chapter of life for everyone, but as I look back, I am proud of all the Hamtramck Public Schools community has accomplished together despite the circumstances. Each and every individual in the HPS family contributes to our success and the success of the students we are so privileged to serve. Team members have worked tirelessly since March to develop, implement and maintain an entirely new system of education – a remarkable task that required the skills and dedication of thousands of people. It is hard for those not in the educational field to understand all that was required this year, so I would like to recognize some of the amazing that was done this year by our HPS team.

- Our teachers and paraprofessionals learned new technologies and instructional methods and adapted their curriculums to a virtual environment. They did so quickly and creatively, resulting in high levels of

student engagement and learning.

- Our administrative team established a framework for virtual learning, and provided critical support and guidance to their students, teachers and families throughout the year.
- Our food services team prepared and distributed more than 360,000 meals for our HPS families this year. They were supported by our transportation staff, who adapted quickly to their new roles in the district.
- Our maintenance, custodial, food services and security staff continued to report to the buildings throughout the year to keep onsite staff safe and healthy and ensure that our schools were ready to welcome our students back.
- Our Parent and Family liaisons regularly connected with our families at all hours of the day and night to provide the support and resources needed to keep them safe, healthy and engaged in learning.
- Our IT department supported our teachers, students and families as they entered the virtual environment, providing support and troubleshooting to the devices that were now so critical

to learning.

- Our office staff at both building and district levels worked closely across departments to make sure HPS students and families had all they needed to navigate their "new normal."

These are just some of the departments and teams that have made an impact on our success in 2020, and I apologize for any that I have missed. By uniting in our mission to provide continuity of learning in a challenging time, we have been more successful than we had hoped. As we enter the new year, I feel a sense of optimism. While we all must remain diligent in our efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, new updates surrounding vaccine distribution provide great reason for hope. Regardless of whether or not we are in-person or virtual, I am confident that our path forward will be smooth because of the strength of our community. Thank you all for your continued patience and ability to adapt quickly during these difficult times, and I look forward to reconnecting with all of you in this new year.

Obituaries

WAGENAAR



Valerie Jean (Taylor) Wagenaar, 65, died December 20, 2020. Valerie J. Wagenaar, the daughter of RC Taylor and Francis (Hoxie) Taylor, was born on March 22, 1955 and unexpectedly passed away on December 20, 2020. She was a lifelong resident of Hamtramck, Michigan. In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her brother William Taylor, and her

husband William Wagenaar. Valerie was a loving mother to her oldest daughter Michelle (Wagenaar) Mohamed, and her husband Abdulaziz Mohamed, and her youngest daughter Cheryl (Wagenaar) Al-Sahme. Valerie was also a very proud grandmother to her seven grandchildren, Crystal Jackson, Joseph Al-Shame, Jacob Al-Shame, Marissa Vukaj, Nicholas Gregory, Laith Mohamed, and Haythem Mohamed. Valerie was also a very loving great-grandmother to her two great-grand-

daughters, Serenity Rodriguez and Jade McColloch. Valerie is also survived by five of her siblings, Debra (Taylor) Gubin, Peggy (Taylor) Zdonkiewicz, Cathy (Taylor) Haynes, Robert Taylor, RC Taylor Jr. and many beautiful nieces and nephews. There will be no memorial services held per the request of Valerie prior to her passing.



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FRIDAY, Jan. 8, 3-8 p.m. – City chicken dinner at the Hamtramck Moose (9421 Conant). Dinner includes: 2 well-portioned city chicken, mashed potatoes, veggie, soup, bread and butter, \$12. Call 313-871-9115 or 313-753-2026. Carry out, curb side pickup and free delivery in Hamtramck for seniors and handicapped only. Call early, limited amount dinners.

SATURDAY, Jan. 9, 2-4 p.m. – Take-out Soup Kitchen at Holy Cross P.N.C. Church, 2311 Pulaski, at Fleming. Everyone is welcome!

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City Life: 2020 was a year of big ideas, new challenges

Amarillo, Texas.

The hotel had published information on how it was keeping high social distancing standards, which made us feel comfortable staying there for the night. It was my first time in Texas, and I was impressed immediately by its bigness in every way I could imagine: the vastness of seemingly endless horizons in each direction, the deep blue sky pasted with clouds that looked like large islands floating on great seas (one looked the size and shape of Greenland, I thought).

The direction of sunlight seemed to change and come from different angles soon after we entered New Mexico, allowing the tones and undertones of earthy colors on the ground to take on different shapes and sizes, smaller and more distinct, than seemed visible in Texas. Arizona was different still, more rock, higher elevation, more desert surrounding mountains in the distance.

We stopped in Flagstaff to rest for the night, then set off for the Grand Canyon, my first time there. Robin had been there five times before and was gracious in sharing with me memories and stories of those previous visits.

The jagged rock and high plateaus stretched farther than the eye could see, disappearing from view over more layers of rock. The colors changed with the light thrown by the bright sun overhead, from light brown to dark, from stubbles of green patch (lichen? moss?) on the flatter surfaces to deep red in higher elevations.

In spots I could see the Colorado River, but only a sliver of it, as it wound through the canyon below. Back in the van, we began heading first downstate to Phoenix, then veering west on the road to California.

Our destination was San Bernardino and a house in need of some yard work and other maintenance.

In heat reaching the mid-90s each day, we hacked and pulled weeds, mowed lawns and stuffed waste containers full of clippings and other outdoor refuse.

One night we were invited to do a safe beach walk in Venice Beach, a popular Los Angeles neighborhood known for its over three-mile long boardwalk along the oceanfront and quirky, colorful characters that flock there.

My cousin Aleksandra, who invited us, lives a block from this normally hyperactive district. But on this night it was quiet and calm, a 180-degree turn away from the packed crowds I'd seen in Venice on previous visits.

On the ride back to Michigan and Ohio, we stopped in Wyoming for a night then at Mt. Rushmore for two more, then at a park at the Iowa-Illinois border, before getting back on the road home.

In July, my attention turned to local City Life from a newfound perspective: seeing planned com-

munity development projects realized in Cleveland, where I was spending an increasing amount of time. I recalled that some years ago for another publication I had the pleasure of interviewing Tony Goldman, a New York developer who had some interest in applying his proven to work strategies to Detroit redevelopment projects. What were those strategies that worked? Namely, incentives for creatives to move to Detroit - "100,000 artists" was the direct quote - remaking the city with "art and food." That was also a direct quote. A grand, at once simple, idea.

What are some of Goldman's credits using similar strategies? In the 1960s and 1970s, his art and food concepts helped revitalize Manhattan's then deteriorating Upper West Side; in the 1980s, his development aesthetic helped reshape and rebrand the downtown NYC neighborhood south of Houston Street (SoHo); and in the 1990s Goldman's gaze turned to Florida, where his company began buying and rehabbing buildings in Miami's South Beach, bringing a once showy turned shabby 1930s' Art Deco district back to life.

Sadly, Goldman died before he could implement his vision in Detroit.

So what does this story have to do with Hamtramck?

Goldman's overall plan was to reinvent Detroit as "the capital of the avant-garde, the experimental," not by throwing money at it, not with stadiums, but with art, food, urban farms, and green spaces for walking, cycling or simply idling the day away.

Also: with thoughtful intention giving away properties to creative doers and makers (the idea is a not a new one: the properties must be brought up to code and on the tax rolls within a reasonable amount of time, say, 5-10 years).

Why not take a page from this never written Detroit book and do something similar in Hamtramck? This community is already stuffed with the kind of existing assets and potential for growth that would likely make most forward-thinking urban planners and developers want to leap into action.

I was in Cleveland that month on a short tour with Don Lenz, a prominent Ohio planning and development consultant who has written neighborhood revitalization grants that total in the millions of dollars.

We spent a few hours walking in Gordon Square in the city's Detroit Shoreway neighborhood. That neighborhood was in dire straits when a plan to rebrand it as an arts district was drawn up in the late-1990s.

The neighborhood history is uncannily like Hamtramck's: humble beginnings about 100 years ago as a landing spot for immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe. Outbound

migration to suburban communities, much like patterns seen in Detroit and Hamtramck, marked the second half of the 20th century.

But its long-established material assets like movie theaters and social halls were seen as anchors for smart urban redevelopment projects. A renovated arcade built in 1921 is a centerpiece.

The Cleveland Public Theatre is in the district, as is the Capitol Theatre screening indie and classic films, the Near West Theatre for live musical performances and Maelstrom Collabora-

tive Arts for more experimental fare.

Gordon Square is peppered with restaurants, bars and cafes, salons and boutiques selling everything from books and records to trendy interior design knickknacks to kinky leather gear and other unique wearables.

Flags of social unity and positive-change activism (i.e. rainbow flags and Black Lives Matter banners and murals) are strewn about the district, making it welcoming to a wide range of people who live or visit there.

The neighborhood also

participates in the Safe Routes to School movement, which focuses on creating, encouraging and sustaining safe walking and biking by kids to school.

Cleveland, it turns out, has it together, turning collaborative relationships into grassroots entrepreneurship success stories.

Behind the effort: the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO) and the Gordon Square Arts District-Cleveland Improvement Corporation (GSAD-CIC), a 501c3 nonprofit.

There are maps of the

district published online and at a glass-encased sign on Detroit Avenue, where most of the commercial activity is concentrated.

We can make an effective argument for Hamtramck, in its 2-square mile entirety, being reinvented as an arts district, or a creative industries district, where welcoming and hospitality, diversity and inclusivity could be the backbone of the local economy.

All the ingredients are here, disparate may they be.

There is affordable, and

Continued on page 8

Notice of Public Comment

City of Hamtramck – Department of Community and Economic Development

Notice is given to any and all interested parties that the draft 2021 Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the City of Hamtramck, Wayne County, Michigan will be available for review and comment for 30 days beginning Thursday, December 24th. The City of Hamtramck Department of Community and Economic Development is preparing this five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources requirements. When completed, the plan will serve as a guide for the acquisition and development of community recreation facilities and programs over the next five (5) years. The plan is available for viewing on our website at www.hamtramck.us/. All interested parties may submit comments via email to ccopp@hamtramckcity.com or by filling out the form at <https://forms.gle/QG71VmM8v1HSvLaS8>. Hard copies of the plan are available at City Hall. Any input is greatly appreciated.



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Deadline for classifieds for next week is Thursday at Noon
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By Charles Sercombe
This week's Crime Log covers Dec. 29-Jan. 4.

Tuesday, Dec. 29

- Children's Protective Services alerted the police department about a complaint the agency received.
- A red Ford Fusion was found on Trowbridge St. with damage to the driver's side and a broken side mirror.

Wednesday, Dec. 30

- A resident in the 3800 block of Belmont St. was ticketed for violating the city's noise ordinance. Also issued at the location was a ticket for being disorderly.
- Gun shots were heard coming from an upper flat at a residence in the area of Caniff and Lumpkin.
- At 6 p.m., a man was robbed at gunpoint while in the area of Caniff and Conant. The suspect fled the scene.

Thursday, Dec. 31

- A resident reported that his white 2016 Dodge Charger was stolen while in the 12000 block of Jos. Campau.
- A man who had previously reported that his gun was missing reported that he found it.
- A Post Office employee reported that she was physically threatened by a suspect while in the 12000

block of Klinger St.

Friday, Jan. 1

- At about 1:30 a.m., officers broke up a large party of about 200-300 people who gathered in the 3900 block of Christopher St.
- A resident in the 3300 block of Doremus St. reported that his window was shot out sometime during the night.

Saturday, Jan. 2

- A resident in the 2000 block of Trowbridge St. was arrested after assaulting his girlfriend.
- A vehicle stolen out of Hamtramck was recovered in Detroit, in the area of Fenkell and Prevost.
- A resident was ticketed at Commor and Sobieski for being disorderly.

Sunday, Jan. 3

- At 4 a.m., a resident reported being assaulted while in the 12000 block of Dyar St.
- An agent for a business in the 8700 block of Jos. Campau Ave. reported a break-in.

Monday, Jan. 4

- A resident of Gibraltar reported an illegal dumping at his property at Caniff and Dyar.
- A Lehman St. resident reported an incident of malicious destruction of property.

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City Life: 2020 was a year of big ideas, new challenges

Continued from page 6

good, food, led largely by a host of cooks and servers from Europe, the Middle East, South and East Asia. Markets with fresh produce, meats and fish, grains and spices, abound; as do espresso and other coffee drinks, at Oloman Cafe (also an art gallery, curated by owner Zlatan Sadikovic, a photographer trained in Bosnia), Cafe 1923 and Delite Cafe. Hamtramck still rocks, by all accounts (before Covid-19, and hopefully, after), with cool music programming (for which it has been widely known since the 1970s). Planet Ant Theatre has carved out institution-like status while remaining relevant since the early-1990s. It is one of the city's clear cultural assets, an anchor and a connector. The Film Lab is a model of hybrid expression: a screening room – a microcinema, to be precise – with live introductions by co-founder Josh Gardner, and a swank bar with cocktails named for great directors in film history. It is another anchor. The long-delayed Joe Louis Greenway, a bicycle trail earmarked for construction next spring on Jos. Campau is yet another. There is talk of murals to line the alley section of the trail (there is one already created on the back of a building between Evaline and Edwin streets). The entire city is walkable, a living example of the “15-minute” neighbor-

hood theory, the subject of a 2020 Bloomberg CityLab story, “whereby residents’ shopping, work, recreational and cultural needs are no more than a short walk or bike ride from home.” Put it into practice, the article suggests a faster way back to economic health once the pandemic eases its grip. What Hamtramck could use is a reality check. Look into the mirror and see itself for what it is: a small, vibrant city driven by multiple, mostly raw, disconnected energies. That’s a good thing, make no mistake. But it needs a more focused vision, a reimagination of the near-future, a bold but coherent plan, badly. What will it be in less than two years, when it celebrates 100 years since the original charter was written in 1922 (Hamtramck was a village before that, and a township even before that, founded in 1798)? How about in five years? Or 10? Dreaming of possible futures is part of planning and developing cities, small or large. Ideas are born of dreams, the best rewarded with smart money and productive investments that serve community life first and foremost. Lenz told me “cooperation and collaboration” were essential building blocks for many of the successful projects he’d worked on. Adding good organization, leadership and communication to the mix greatly improves chances of success. Can it happen here? Sure, why not? Put our heads together and dream big. The future is an open book. What stories will we write in it? — During this strange year of avoidance and isolation I had had plenty of time to think about the life of this city: what it is now, what it can be in the future. What are its strengths? Where is it lacking? What can we learn from successful other places, especially those that have used simple, progressive, cost-effective strategies to move themselves forward? I came up with a list of assets and related comments (mine alone) about how to best leverage them for economic growth, ethical reparations and improving the overall quality of our city life. For an old, small, dusty place, Hamtramck has more enviable assets than you may think. Let’s just begin with “location, location, location” and allow our thoughts to roll: To paraphrase a marketing strategy used by the former Motor nightclub – which in the late-1990s attracted a high volume of dance music patrons from across southeastern Michigan to the former Polish Falcons of America Nest 86 hall on Caniff – “all roads lead to Hamtramck.” Two major highways, interstates 75 and 94, either cut through or are just off the city’s perimeter, potentially delivering visitors

here from all directions. The city would be wise to take a page from another 1990s project, an exhibition by Hamtramck-based artists called “Exit 55,” a reference to the ramps off I-75 that bring motorists from the south (leading to Holbrook) and the north (Caniff). Location branding and more specific signage on heavily trafficked roads are simple ways to keep Hamtramck alive and kicking in the public imagination. Why not, for example, partner with state and federal authorities on interstate signage alerting people to Hamtramck’s “Stadium District at Exit 55,” which includes Depression-era Keyworth Stadium and the newly-renamed Norman “Turkey” Stearnes Field at Historic Hamtramck Stadium? Another potential partner in this marketing scheme could be the Detroit City Football Club (DCFC), which plays championship caliber soccer at the renovated Keyworth, packing the stands (pre-COVID-19, of course) with thousands of passionate fans - a vast majority of them visitors from outside the city - for each home game. The forward-thinking DCFC organization is an asset unto itself, celebrating diversity and inclusion, standing in support of immigrant and LGBTQ rights, not to mention actively encouraging hungry and thirsty fans to participate in the local night economy after home contests. Night economy trans-

lates into food and drink businesses, naturally, but also includes live theater (Planet Ant) and movies (The Film Lab), both done at a high level of innovation and professionalism, and widely celebrated independent rock ‘n’ roll and electronic music options. This aspect of city life has been name-checked through the preceding decades by artists, promoters, journalists and discerning fans and audiences. It would be wise for the City to use this alternative lifestyle history in future marketing campaigns. The good health of this after dark sector is essential to the future economy of the city. Communities across Michigan can now allow bar service until 4 a.m., an extension Hamtramck should support with vigor. It has been said that many things of historical significance can only happen at night. Creativity finds its light there. People with deepened imaginations are attracted to it, and thrive there. Hamtramck has attracted plenty of these distinctive high-value individuals and businesses through the years. And it must continue to attract them. One sure way is to activate the night, making certain to retain Hamtramck’s current scruffy charms, only staying open later and producing the same quality of food, drink and variety of social experiences as it does now. How to do it even post-pandemic is still in question, with some long standing night establishments likely not to survive the deleterious effects of Covid-19, but it is not too soon to begin planting new seeds for economic growth. Better quality options, borne of healthy competition and ringing cash registers, are also welcome. Doing it all at higher volume with increased capacity attracting more customers from across the region is the aim. Some people will not come by car but by bicycle via the Joe Louis Greenway, which is literally at the city’s doorstep. On Jos. Campau, between Carpenter and just north of McNichols, Detroit has completed a stretch of the long-awaited non-motorized trail that will connect Hamtramck with Eastern Market, Wayne State and the College for Creative Studies, the Detroit Medical Center and downtown (and Corktown, Mexicantown and Southwest Detroit farther down the road). It is an important, possibly lucrative, link to these nearby Detroit neighborhoods and institutions. Hamtramck is walkable, remains affordable (though, yes, cost of living here is creeping up, though still much less expensive than Detroit’s Midtown, West Village and other desirable nearby neighborhoods) and has opportunities for additional residential development on city- and privately-owned lots.

There are still a number of “toothless” sections of long blocks (from Jos. Campau to Lumpkin) on the city’s south end. A few years ago I did a walk around Wyandotte for a story for another publication. The downriver community had planted “for sale” signs on vacant properties it owned in residential sections of the city. To its credit Hamtramck has now adopted a similar policy, hoping to attract builders of townhouses and other multi-family residential dwellings. The city must encourage housing that appeals to creatives, thinkers and doers if it is to survive the challenges of the near future, attracting people who see commuting to DMC, WSU, CCS, Eastern Market and downtown as a reasonable option. Young professionals and empty nesters looking for amenities accessed by non-motorized means – Hamtramck has always been the aforementioned “15-minute” community now a part of trendy urban planning initiatives across the country – should also be targets of these marketing strategies. This City has the primary assets it takes to start the ball rolling. It needs to use them, aggressively, and do even more beyond strictly dollars and cents development. The City of Southfield, as just one example, has installed “Black Lives Matter” banners on utility poles near its Civic Center. That’s bold, assertive and decisive action letting the world know where a local government stands regarding the single most significant social justice question of these turbulent times. Such actions are attractive to creative, forward-thinking commercial and residential investors looking for the right location on the ethical side of history. Silence on whether the lives of people of color matter does little to inspire confidence in potential new residents and progressive-minded investors. Hamtramck should be among the first communities in the region to make repairs for the racial insensitivity that led to a 50-year discrimination lawsuit for an ill-conceived urban renewal project hatched in the 1960s. To be clear, the city must be bold: marketing location, mobility, diversity, inclusivity, reaching for ethical modern living standards; publicly owning and correcting past mistakes, building a better, more equitable community of the future. That’s a way forward Hamtramck can take, if it so desires. Who will activate and maintain this possible better tomorrow remains the question for the year ahead. Walter Wasacz is a Hamtramck-based writer, consultant and photographer. Follow him on Instagram @ nospectacle



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