



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Saturday, November 17, 2018; Talks in the Hall, Cogswell Hall, 7200 Franklin Boulevard: City of Cleveland Department of Aging Director Mary McNamara talks about services available from her department. The event was co-sponsored by Cogswell Hall and Cleveland Westside Village. (See related article below.)

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Near Westside Newspaper

Town Hall at Cleveland State University celebrates 200th Anniversary of Cleveland's first newspaper

by Chuck Hoven

On November 6th, the Cleveland State University School of Communications hosted a Town Hall event to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the publication of Cleveland's first newspaper. Communications students in Associate Professor Edward Horowitz's Foundation of Journalism and Promotional Communication class created display

stations featuring different newspaper themes such as the history of newspapers in Cleveland, community newspapers, ethnic newspapers, the history of comic strips, and Cleveland's notable columnists. The Town Hall also featured speakers talking about the importance of a free press to a democracy.

Associate Professor Horowitz and the faculty of the College of

Communications invited newspaper staff members of community and ethnic newspapers in Cleveland to join in the celebration. Horowitz noted that the Town Hall was one of three events held in Cleveland this year to celebrate the history of the first newspaper. The first event was held at the City Club this summer; the second event was an exhibit at the Main Branch of the Cleveland Public Library. The library exhibit has a Near West Side connection. John Vacha, who for 20 years served as the newspaper advisor for the Lincoln West High School paper the *Freedom Rider*, worked with the Cleveland Public Library to create the exhibit. The exhibit included a copy of the first Cleveland newspaper, *The Cleveland Gazette and Commercial Register* which published its first issue on July 31, 1818.

Cleveland State University (CSU) Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Gregory M. Sadlek welcomed guests and shared some thoughts on the importance of newspapers. Dean Sadlek said that computer scientists have a saying "garbage in, garbage out." He said, "The same is true of our political system. You need a trusted source of information to make valid choices on election day." He noted that newspapers are the traditional source of that information and fact checking in our society. He continued on page 5

Department of Aging Director Mary McNamara outlines services and resources available to Cleveland seniors

At a November 17th Talk in the Hall at Cogswell Hall, Cleveland Department of Aging Executive Director Mary McNamara explained the range of programs, services and resources her department helps link to qualified Cleveland residents. The Talk in the Hall, co-sponsored by Cogswell Hall and the Cleveland



PHOTO BY DEBBIE SADLON
Tuesday, November 6, 2018; Cleveland State University School of Communication Town Hall celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the First Newspaper in Cleveland, Cleveland State University Student Center Glasscock Ballroom: Plain Dealer Editor George Rodrigue shares some thoughts about the importance of newspapers to sustaining a democratic society.

Westside Village, offered the opportunity for Cogswell Hall residents and members of Cleveland Westside Village to learn more about resources available for residents facing the challenges of aging in Cleveland's Westside neighborhoods.

McNamara, who lives in a house

on W. 71st off of Franklin – not far from Cogswell Hall, said her house was once owned by her aunt and uncle. She said her aunt and uncle had five sons and her uncle made sure the boys didn't disturb the peace of residents of Cogswell Hall. McNamara said her uncle made continued on page 6



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Saturday, November 10, 2018; Midwest Playoff Rugby Semi-Final Playoff Match, St. Ignatius High School's Wasmer Field, 1947 W. 28th Street: The Cleveland Crusaders play the Indianapolis Impalas. The Crusaders won the match 42-17, moving on to the Midwest Championship game.

Bond Accountability Commission report examines CMSD's construction workforce inclusion program

by Chuck Hoven

At its November meeting, the Bond Accountability Commission examined how the Cleveland Metropolitan School District was monitoring its workforce inclusion program and what resources are available to train Clevelanders interested in working in the construction trades. The Bond Accountability Commission (BAC), charged to be a watchdog on behalf of taxpayers to monitor the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's (CMSD) school construction program, held the meeting on November 27th at Max Hayes High School.

Bond Accountability Commission (BAC) Executive Director Elise Hara Auvil presented the BAC with a Workforce Inclusion Report. She said the goals of CMSD for minority, female and residential participation in construction employment were the same as those of the City of Cleveland – 20% minority, 5% female and 20% Cleveland residents.

Patrick Zohn, CMSD Chief Oper-

ations Officer, said CMSD also has a requirement that contractors are required to provide 400 hours of work to a recent graduate of CMSD for every \$1 million dollars in the contract. He said recent graduates mean 2007 or 2008 – (when the requirement started) until now.

While there was a lot of discussion on how to monitor and verify reporting on workforce inclusion, BAC Board Member Jack Bialosky said the real issue is that minority and women workers don't exist to the extent we would like them to. He cited the need to create workers and businesses with the ability to do the work.

Executive Director Hara Auvil outlined in her report a number of construction training programs that were designed to train individuals for jobs in construction and thus provide contractors with qualified candidates to help meet hiring goals for minorities, females and Cleveland residents. However, with the ex- continued on page 7



PHOTO BY MICHAEL OAKAR
Saturday, November 17, 2018; Neighborhood Family Practice's Kids Cooking Class, Urban Community School, 4909 Lorain Avenue: Children from the Near West Family Network put on rubber gloves as they work with Neighborhood Family Practice Wellness Nurse Sara Doran to make No Bake Granola Bites.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Tuesday, November 20, 2018; Cleveland Public Library Carnegie South Branch, 3096 Scranton Road: After an extensive restoration and renovation, the historic building will officially reopen on December 1st with a ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration from noon to 5 p.m. The library branch has had a temporary home at 2704 Clark Avenue since the South Branch was closed for renovations in 2013.

ARTS

TRANSFORMER STATION, 1490 W. 29th Street. "In Her Image: Photographs by Rania Matar" through January 13, 2019. Hours: Wednesday thru Sunday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Thurs: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

BENEFITS

#HELPIHOMECARE is a digital version of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless's Street Cared to assist those experiencing homelessness to reach services.

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP): Assists eligible residents with home heating costs during the winter months. Call 1-800-282-0880. **EMERGENCY-HEAP**: Provides heating assistance once during heating season to income eligible residents who have been disconnected. Call 216-350-8008 or make an appointment online at:

<https://ceogc.itfrontdesk.com>

WATER AND SEWER AFFORDABILITY PROGRAM offers a 40% discount on water and sewer charges to Cleveland residents over age 65 with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. Applications are available at www.chnhousingpartners.org. Call CHN Housing Partners at 888-901-1222 for more information

CITY OF CLEVELAND

CLEVELAND CARE CALLS is available for Cleveland Senior Citizens age 60 or older or adults 18-59 with a disability. Automated telephone reassurance system. Individuals receive a call on the days they request, Monday thru Friday from 7 a.m. – 11 a.m. to check on their well-being. If the system is unable to reach you, additional calls will be made in a 30-minute period. If unsuccessful

your designated contact person will be called. If unsuccessful in reaching the contact person, the Department of Public Safety may be asked to check on your wellbeing. For an application

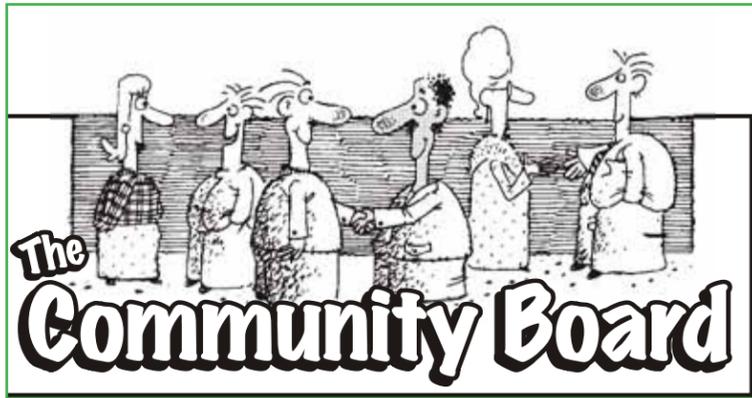
be provided. ADA accessible. Spanish translations will be provided.

SECOND PUBLIC COMMUNITY MEETING ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES sponsored by Citizens United for Fairness, Thursday, December 13, from 6-8 p.m. at Franklin Circle Church, 1688 Fulton Road. Cuyahoga County Officials, Director of the Board of Revision Shelley Davis and Fiscal Officer Dennis Kennedy. Learn and understand the complaint process: how to file a complaint and prove your case to the Board of Revision. An opportunity to speak with and question county officials about how and why taxes were raised. The time to file with the Board of Revision will be Jan. 1 – March 31, 2019. For more information call Toni at 216-631-2260.

WALTER MARTENS AND SONS TREE OF REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY: Saturday, December 15 at 5 p.m. at 9811 Denison Avenue. The Tree of Remembrance allows families, regardless of whether or not they were served by Martens, to decorate ornaments in honor of their loved ones. The ornaments are then placed on the tree and is dedicated as part of the service. All those wishing to decorate ornaments for their loved ones are welcomed to do so seven days a week from now until Friday, Dec. 14 from 10AM to 8PM.

EDUCATION

BASIC COMPUTER SKILLS: Are you lacking basic computer skills which are holding you back from getting a job, restricting you at work, or limiting you in life, ...well **Digital C, technology skills building program**, will teach **basic computer** classes for the beginner at the West Side Catholic Center. The



The Plain Press Community Board is a listing of a variety of free activities and resources for neighborhoods served by the Plain Press. The printing of the Community Board is sponsored by Organize! Ohio through donations from readers and supporters.

to the program contact Cleveland Care calls Project Director at 216-664-6316. **FREE EMERGENCY ALERTS FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**: Keep informed about emergency situations in your neighborhood with this Code RED service. To sign up visit www.city.cleveland.oh.us.

COMMUNITY

OHIO CITY NEIGHBORHOOD VISION: Introduction to the Planning Process, Thursday, December 6th from 6-8 p.m. at Franklin Circle Church, 1688 Fulton Road. The first of a series of three public meetings to help shape the future of Ohio City. Join Ward 3 Councilman Kerry McCormack and Ohio City Incorporated for a series of public discussions about the new Ohio City Neighborhood Vision. Help provide feedback to influence development guidelines to ensure Ohio City maintains its historic integrity, long-term affordability and walkable, and transit-connected urban character. Conversations will be led by City Architecture. Complementary food and childcare will

three-week program, will be held twice a week, Tuesday and Thursday, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. There is no charge. Child care is provided. All are welcomed. Please call Frank Johaneck at 216-631-4741 ext. 167 to register and class start dates.

BRAIN BEE: Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) invites area students ages 14 thru 18 to test their knowledge of neuroscience in the NEOMED Brain Bee. The Brain Bee will take place Saturday, Jan. 12, 2019, at NEOMED. A free monthly tutoring sessions is available on Dec. 8 at NEOMED. Students may register at neomed.edu/brainbee. For more information about the Brain Bee, please contact Dr. Peterson at 330.325.6476 or dpeterson@neomed.edu.

HEALTH & SAFETY

FLU VACCINES AT NO COST TO YOU: Every Monday at McCafferty Health Center, 4242 Lorain Avenue, from 8:30—11:30 a.m. Please bring your card

if you have insurance. If you don't have insurance, no problem. Call 664-6603 for more information.

MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT ENDS DECEMBER 7: For help with coverage choices visit Medicare.gov or contact the Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program at 1-800-686-1578 or visiting their website at: www.insurance.ohio.gov.

LEGAL ADVICE

NEED LEGAL HELP WITH YOUR JOB? Been paid late or not at all? Not received the minimum wage? Not received overtime pay? Not received your last pay check? Experienced unsafe working conditions? Had other employment-related problems. The Legal Aid's Wage Project can help. Call 888-817-3777 toll free to complete an application for legal services.

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES: Need immigration Help? Call Catholic Charities at 216-939-3769. Low cost immigration assistance for applications filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and representation in Immigration Court.]

POLITICAL ACTION

NOBLE MEETING: Wednesday, December 5th at 5:30 p.m. at 3500 Lorain Avenue. Continuing work on platform of issues to address in the State of Ohio.

VOLUNTEERS

CASA of Cuyahoga County, a program of Child and Family Advocates of Cuyahoga County, needs volunteers to advocate for children who have been neglected and abused. CASAs are everyday citizens who are appointed by the Court to advocate for the safety and well-being of children and represent the children's best interests. CASAs are trained to investigate, facilitate, advocate, and monitor one or two cases at a time to help the Court make the best decision for a safe, caring, and permanent home for children involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Those interested in becoming a CASA, please visit cfadvocates.org or call 216.443.3377 for more information.

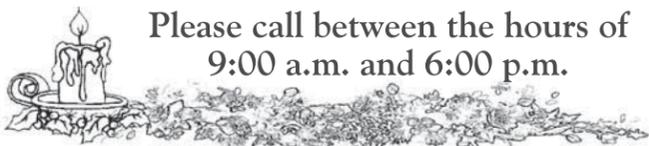
CALLING ALL CRAFTERS: Warm Up Cleveland and the Cleveland Public Library are seeking donations of handmade items to help our neighbors in need: hats, scarves, cowls, mittens, gloves, handwarmers, headbands, socks, slippers, sweaters, shawls, blankets, afghans, quilts, stuffed toys, baby clothes, baby booties, and baby blankets. All sizes needed: infants to adults. Drop off completed items, yarn or supplies year-round at any Cleveland Public Library location. Donations of washable yarn, knitting needles and crochet hooks are very much appreciated. Busy knitters and crocheters will turn your unwanted yarn into finished objects. All items are distributed to local charities. Join the group at: www.ravelry.com/groups/warm-up-cleveland. For more information contact Outreach and Programming Services at 216-623-2921 or visit: www.cpl.org.

YOUTH

LEARN TO PLAY LACROSS CLINICS: These one-day clinics will teach players the basics of the sport in a fun and active environment. Sticks will be provided for all players so all the kids will need are sneakers and comfortable clothes to play in. U7 Clinic (ages 4-7) Sunday, December 9th 11am-12noon at Urban Community School - 4909 Lorain Avenue & Learn to Play Clinic (ages 8-15) on Sunday, January 20th, 10am-12noon at Urban Community School - 4909 Lorain Avenue. Both are free! You can register at ohiocity.org/lacrosse. If you have any questions please reach out to Matt Burke at mburke@ohiocity.org.

Christmas Dinner

There will be a delicious Christmas dinner served at St. Augustine Church, 2486 West 14 St., on Christmas day from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. If you are homebound and unable to attend, please call 216-781-5880 and we will make arrangements for a meal to be delivered right to your door. Requests for Christmas Dinners will be taken up until 12 noon on Monday, December 24th.



Please call between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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St. Herman's House of Hospitality 27th
Annual St. Nicholas Spaghetti Dinner

Sunday, December 2, 2018
 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

St. Malachi's Parish Hall
 2459 Washington Ave., Cleveland, OH

Dinners (price is minimum donation requested):
 Cost: \$8.00 – Adults \$6.00 – Seniors (over 60)
 \$5.00 – Children (ages 6-12) Ages 5 and under – Free



Donations can be mailed to:
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American Lebanese Community Council presents Lebanon Day at Cleveland City Hall

In the first floor Rotunda at Cleveland City Hall, on November 19th, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson welcomed a crowd of over 300 to the 8th Annual Celebration of Lebanon Day in Cleveland and the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Independence of Lebanon.

Jackson noted the importance of cultural diversity to the development of the city and thanked the Lebanese community for their many contributions to the city of Cleveland in areas ranging from business to education. Jackson went on to say **continued on page 8**

Call for financial accounting and summary of accomplishments for Cudell Improvement

To the editor:

I am writing regarding Victoria Shea's October article about Anita Brindza and the Cudell-Detroit Shoreway Strategic Alliance. I am a longtime resident of the Cudell Improvement service area and a 25-year dues-paying member of that organization. I have participated in neighborhood initiatives and volunteer efforts for nearly thirty years.

LETTER

As both a dues-paying member and as someone who pays the federal taxes that fund Cudell, I want nothing more than to see Cudell succeed toward its stated mission of improving our neighborhood. Unfortunately, I can report from personal experience that I have not received any report of the results of Cudell's work – either a financial accounting or a summary of accomplishments—for most of the time I have been a faithful contributing member. Until the Alliance occurred, I did not even know who worked at Cudell other than Mrs. Brindza.

According to Cudell Improvement's 2016 IRS Form 990, which can be viewed for free at Foundation-Center.org, Mrs. Brindza's compensation in 2016 was \$100,559. The total revenue in 2016 for Cudell was \$305,522. This means that one third of the entire revenue of Cudell Improvement went toward Mrs. Brindza's compensation. This seems like an extremely high percentage to me, with a compensation level that exceeds probably 99 percent of the people in the Cudell service area. What did we get for our money?

As a non-profit organization, Cudell is governed by a board of trustees that is elected by, and answers to, the community. Mrs. Brindza was an employee of that

board. It is shocking now that she would come out and fight against the board after it paid her so much money for so many years.

The article references a "severance package." I would be very interested to know the details of such a package. The wording of the reference, and of the article overall, makes it seem that Mrs. Brindza was terminated from her employment, but my understanding from Mrs. Brindza herself is that she chose to retire. What really happened?

Cudell Improvement could have developed alternative sources of revenue rather than rely solely on taxpayer support. It chose not to. Why?

Is the strategic alliance between Cudell Improvement and Detroit Shoreway going to work? I don't know. But what I do know is that change was needed, and the Alliance is the first step toward change.

Victoria Shea should sharpen her journalistic pencil and dig for the answers to the real questions that people want to know about the operation of Cudell Improvement. I have outlined many of them here. Additionally, the *Plain Press* needs to serve the interests of the community, not those of individuals.

Michael Ruffing

Editor's Note: As an individual in the community, you have some interesting questions that a journalist could address to the Cudell Improvement Board of Trustees for answers. The *Plain Press* will consider our editorial resources in assigning a writer to the task... or, might you be interested in taking on the assignment yourself, and submitting the results of your investigation in the form of a news article to the *Plain Press*?

Local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chapter Announces New Executive Director

The Board of Directors of NAMI Greater Cleveland announced the appointment of Christina "Chris" Mignogna as the organization's new Executive Director. Mignogna has been a volunteer with NAMI for a number of years and an advocate for mental health in her personal and professional life. Chris holds a Master's in Social Work from Ohio State University and is currently on their alumni board. She brings her knowledge of mental health, organizational development and fundraising to NAMIGC.

Mignogna's former position was in the private sector, most recently as a Senior Account Executive for Beacon Health Options. There she developed award-winning programs around health and wellness and worked closely with a clinical team of counselors and social workers to deliver employee assistance benefits and services at many Fortune 500 organizations.

When reflecting on this next chapter of her career, the Chagrin Falls resident says, "It has always been my mission to touch lives. I am looking forward to engaging in conversations that will result in making NAMI's support groups, education programs and Helpline available to more Clevelanders. Furthermore, NAMI is a membership organization. I encourage you to join and help us create a culture of knowledge and



PHOTO COURTESY OF NAMI GC National Alliance on Mental Illness Greater Cleveland's new Executive Director Christina Mignogna.

understanding about mental illness. To join, go to namigreatercleveland.org or call 216-875-7776."

NAMI Greater Cleveland is a grassroots affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and NAMI OHIO. The office of NAMI Greater Cleveland is located in the United Building at 2012 W. 25th Street. Their mission is to empower persons affected by mental illness (both individuals living with mental health diagnoses and their family members) achieve a better quality of life by providing them with mutual support, practical information, referral, advocacy, and educational resources at no cost.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Monday, November 19, 2018; Lebanon Day Celebration, Grand Rotunda, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside: (L-R) Mistress of Ceremonies Leana Orra, Natalie Saikaly Ronayne, and American Lebanese Community Council (ALCC) Chairman Pierre Bejjani. Saikaly Ronayne, a resident of the Edgewater neighborhood and the Development Director for Cleveland MetroParks, accepts an award for her efforts in helping to promote and preserve Lebanese culture in the community.

Resident criticizes interview of Cudell former director as one sided

To the editor:

As an instructor of journalism at Kent State University and Cuyahoga Community College, I am appalled that your newspaper shunned journalistic ethics to run what was essentially a rant by Anita Brindza, retired director of Cudell Improvement Inc., in your October 2018 edition ("Former executive director of Cudell Improvement Anita Brindza speaks regarding the Cudell Improvement/Detroit Shoreway Strategic Alliance").

LETTER

Brindza was the director of our neighborhood community development corporation for many years, but her day has passed. Because she is distressed that she no longer holds her long-time – and very well paid – position with Cudell, she sat in what your article described as her "much smaller and lonelier office" at Western Elmwood Berea Corp. (WEBCO) and blasted our councilman, Matt Zone, and the staff at Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization, regarding the new strategic partnership between the two CDCs.

Your article was written by Victoria Shea. At the end of the article was

a disclaimer, noting Shea is "friends with Ms. Brindza." Shea ignored what all my students know: that the job of a good journalist is to get BOTH sides of the story. Apparently, Shea made no effort to contact those with an opposing view. If the reporter did make such an effort, she excluded it from her entirely one-sided story.

Writing as a resident of the Cudell neighborhood since 1985 and as a leader of our West Boulevard Neighbors block club, I am THRILLED about the new partnership between Cudell and Detroit Shoreway. We in the Cudell neighborhood can now call on an amazing staff of expert specialists at Detroit Shoreway for questions regarding housing code, low-interest loans for home improvements/ renovation and other concerns; Cudell has gone many months with no housing staff specialist. Further, Christopher Brown, the very excellent safety liaison at Cudell, is now also available to those who live in the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood who have police/safety-related questions or issues.

I hope your newspaper publishes an apology to Matt Zone and the staff of Detroit Shoreway, and I hope

in the future, you will print BOTH sides of any story you publish.

Susan Zimmerman
Cudell Neighborhood

Editor's Note: The article referenced in the above letter was in the format of an interview. Interviews usually reflect the perspective of the person being interviewed --that includes that person's observations, opinions and biases. It is the position of the *Plain Press*, as should be of all news organizations, to give voice to the voiceless --in this case, that would be person being interviewed, Anita Brindza, because she was not present at the public meeting previously covered by the *Plain Press*.

Admittedly, upon retrospect, the "disclaimer" at the end of the interview may have been a bit wishy washy on the part of the *Plain Press* and should not have been included since the format the writer selected did not require it.

The *Plain Press* is firmly committed to our responsibility in holding our elected leaders accountable to the public and will therefore not be issuing apologies to any public officials for carrying out the duties of a free and diligent press.

The Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) GoVoter Project survey seeks feedback by January 1st from voters with disabilities

by the SABE GoVoter Project

"Having a disability is not the problem with voting, it is having the accessible equipment, accessible location, and the respect to do so." - Nancy Ward, *Oklahoma People First*

If you voted in the 2018 General Election, how did you cast your ballot...mail in, early voting or on Election Day at your polling place? Every citizen in the United States has the right to vote and have a voice in electing political leaders and laws. The challenge we face is to make voting available and accessible to all citizens. Many barriers continue to exist that prevent voters with disabilities from exercising their rights. That is why the Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) GoVoter Project is collecting information from voters with disabilities across the United States about their voting experience in 2018!

Many voters with disabilities have had problems voting, and we need your help to find out if voting barriers still exist or have improved. Some of the questions we're working to answer include: • Do voters continue to have problems with physical accessibility getting into polling locations and once inside? • Was the voting equipment, including

accessible voting machines, available and working? • Were the Poll Workers helpful? • Did voters have privacy and independence? • How did the overall voting experience make voters feel?

Will you help us? Voters with disabilities can complete the SABE GoVoter Experience Survey about the 2018 General Election at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2018GoVoterSurvey> or

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PHOTO BY BRUCE CHECEFSKY

Monday, November 19, 2018; A rider travels aboard a Regional Transit Authority bus in Cleveland.

Clevelanders for Public Transit presents its recommendations on how to improve RTA

by Bruce Checefsky

A small group of concerned citizens attended Clevelanders For Public Transit's (CPT) meeting on November 19th at the All Aboard Ohio office in Tower City. CPT's Coordinating Committee Chair Christopher Stocking provided an update on the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) board meeting, recommendations for hiring a new GCRTA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as well as ideas for redesigning the transit system.

Among key issues, the list included a recommendation that the new CEO should be a nationally-recognized expert and industry leader in transit fundamentals, including equitable transit-oriented development and multimodal, first and last-mile connections, such as Bikeshare. In order to maintain accountability, the General Manager's and Secretary/Treasurer's roles should be separate positions.

RTA Board of Trustees expect to receive hiring recommendations for a new CEO as early as March 2019.

CPT acknowledged that the process has been difficult. Attempts made to get more Cuyahoga County representatives on the RTA Board in

support of adapting its recommendations have not been effective.

"We need to get CEO candidates for the position in a public forum with transit riders," said Stocking. "We need a seat at the table. The process should include a question and answer session."

A letter of support for the reelection of Newburgh Heights Mayor Trevor Elkins to the GCRTA Board of Trustees was included in a packet of information provided by CPT. Mayor Elkins was first elected in 2016 by the Cuyahoga County Mayors and Managers Association to fill the seat of Euclid Mayor Bill Cervenik, who retired.

"Mayor Trevor Elkins has been a Board member who has consistently spoken out for positive change. He is the voice of reason, a voice of reform and he has a vision for a positive future for the RTA," CPT stated.

Stocking called on volunteers to contact Cuyahoga County Mayors and Managers Association members in support of the reappointment of Mayor Elkins.

CPT members, Justine Smith and Brain Taylor, who recently moved from Detroit to Cleveland, found

similar issues with the pending GCRTA redesign project and that of the successful redesign by the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT).

"The letter is excellent and very positive. It could have a big impact on the outcome of the RTA Board Election," said Justine Smith.

"I think it's important to draw lines between those who support us and those who don't," a CPT volunteer who wished to remain anonymous said. "Someone at the RTA is definitely pulling strings to block our efforts at reform."

Changes to DDOT's transit redesign project had been made following a lengthy process of evaluation with Detroit community input. GCRTA has a similar opportunity to engage the local community in decision making, but efforts to integrate community input have been stalled, according to CPT.

"DDOT's new system is easy to read," said Stocking. "Their system basically connects 10 of the most heavily used routes under a new brand: ConnectTen."

When asked whether GCRTA has put forth any recommendation or suggestions on the redesign process, Stocking replied, "Nothing yet."

Among the suggestions submitted by CPT for redesign of the transit system includes more fare products, transfers, improved bus services and additional routes.

"Our bus fares are the highest in the country," said Stocking. "We're way at the bottom of affordability. We also need more service in higher ridership areas."

CPT reforms include connecting rider's accounts to smartcards, mobile apps, or credit cards. This would allow riders to pay for a daily, weekly or monthly pass in single-trip increments. CPT also recommends re-instituting ride transfers, and creating a moving a rolling period for all passes. A weekly pass would last for one week after its first use, not until the end of the calendar week.

Federal and State funding have failed to make an impact on the financial resources needed to revamp the failing RTA system, CPT

continued on page 8



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Lakeview Terrace residents have not received mail in over a month

by Bri Dion

Recently, mail services have been a serious problem for residents of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority low rise apartments at Lakeview Terrace. Most people expect to receive mail every day. However, many residents at Lakeview Terrace have not received their mail in over a month. The exact number of residents who have not been receiving mail is not known, but it is a minimum of 40 residents who have not been receiving their mail since mid-October.

Residents not receiving their mail were not informed by either CMHA staff or their postman when the mail was stopped. Finally, resident Yvonne Dawson, talked to one of the postmen about why no mail was being delivered. The postman stated that the key for that set of mailboxes had broken, and the lock and key had yet to be replaced.

When mail is unable to be delivered to the residents' mailboxes of Lakeview Terrace, the residents are forced to pick up their mail from the post office on Orange Ave. The distance from Lakeview Terrace to the Orange Avenue post office is over 2 ½ miles. Without access to transportation, it is nearly impossible for many residents to get their mail.

For many residents they have not

had access to important documents and funds. For Diane Howard, it has prevented her from receiving a new bank debit card and important medications.

This is not the only set of mailboxes that are currently damaged. There are a number of other mailboxes in the Upper Division of Lakeview Terrace that do not even have doors on the mailboxes, and anybody can have access to any mail items in each of the mailboxes all the time.

Representatives from CMHA had not been able to provide a timeline to the residents as to when the mailboxes would be fixed. However, when contacted for this article on Tuesday, November 27th, a representative from the Lakeview Terrace office stated that the mailboxes should be fixed by the end of this week, but there have been no guarantees of that.

"Residents in one of those new fancy \$2,000-a-month apartments on Detroit Road would never have their mail stopped being delivered to them," said Diane Howard. "It is because we are poor public housing residents who the CMHA management and the postal authority believe doesn't matter that we are treated this way."

Holiday Party Style Guide: What to Wear Where

by Silk Allen

The whole month of December is lit, from start to finish, and is filled with a whirlwind of celebrations leading up to New Year's Eve. Our social calendars are full of holiday events like black tie fundraisers; office party shindigs; family and friend dinners; and good old-fashioned bar hoppings that all require different levels of festive wardrobe--so why not have fun and dress up? Shop your closet, the thrift store, a consignment shop, or your favorite retailer to find any of the following holiday party style tips that will get you through this joyfully stylish season.

FASHION

Dresses and Jumpsuits: The little black dress (LBD) is a staple all year round, but it's also the foundation of a great holiday outfit and the perfect blank canvas for any hair and beauty ideas you want to test out, or the statement jewelry and shoes that you want to effortlessly show off. A jumpsuit is a fool proof dress replacement if you are feeling modern; find a flattering cut in a rich fabric and accessorize accordingly.

Texture: If you are the type to wear black all year round, then mixing texture is perfect for you because it adds visual interest to any outfit and you don't have to worry about your black tones matching or falling flat. A plush velvet blazer looks amazing worn over a black lace bodysuit with jeans and a pair of shiny black patent leather ankle boots. Velvet, lace, satin silk, and patent leather all look upscale in a number of ways.

Color: Which look is more shocking: a pop of color or head to toe saturation? Find out this party season by experimenting with a supersaturated pantsuit and a vibrant printed blouse, or wear all black, and play around with bold lipstick shades to see for yourself. Now is the perfect occasion to rock in your face colors with confidence.

Volume: Big hair, exaggerated puff or bell sleeved blouses, wide leg pants, midi or maxi length skirts and dresses, platform shoes... Go big or go home; create a look as big as your personality, but maybe choose one or two elements to avoid taking up too much space in the group photo.

Shine: Is it even a holiday party

without someone wearing something with metallic, sequins or glitter? Be that fun person in the shiny party dress that makes all the photos pop and the dance floor dizzy with your razzle dazzle of an outfit. If you are more of a wallflower than party animal, add a spark to a more subdued outfit with an eye-catching



Silk Allen

accessory. A silver or gold ankle boot screams, "party over here!", while you vibe to the beat from your seat.

Embellishment: Look for simple pieces with fabulous embellishments--a fur collar, a fringe clutch or high heels with tassels, an oversized ruffle; they will all help take an outfit to the next level without trying too hard, and sometimes that's all you need.

Accessories: When you have to fall back on the same little black dress (LBD) or a plain top and pants, don't trip - take this time to go big with your diamonds, real or faux; rhinestones; crystals; and, gold or silver accessories. Drop and chandelier earrings; crystal bib necklaces; and gold or animal print handbags and shoes, go a long way and can easily take a look from dull to glam in seconds!

Shoes: High heeled, over-the-knee boots covered in sequins would look lovely with a turtleneck and mini skirt, while a hot pink, pointy-toed, velvet flat would totally wake up a plain white button down and trousers. The point is, the heel height of the shoe won't matter, as long as it adds some enthusiasm to your outfit.

Winter Coat: You can't wear your waist-length, puffer coat with a cocktail dress. I mean you can, but honestly a fur, wrap, wool or floor-



PHOTO BY LEO JEFFRES

Tuesday, November 6, 2018; Cleveland State University School of Communication's Town Hall celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Cleveland's first newspaper, Student Center Glasscock Ballroom, Cleveland State University: Plain Press staff members: (L-R) Plain Press volunteer reporter Victoria Shea, Editor Debbie Sadlon, and Managing Editor Chuck Hoven.

CLEVELAND STATE'S TOWN HALL

continued from page one

said major newspapers are dedicated to that type of fact checking.

Dean Sadlek called on those present to celebrate "newspapers that provide us with good reliable information." He said it was appropriate that the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Cleveland's first newspaper was being held at a university because "college campuses, like newspapers, are dedicated to finding truth."

Professor Leo Jeffres, a long-time professor in the CSU Communications Department who also

served as a founding member and advisor of the Neighborhood and Community Press Association of Greater Cleveland, talked about the importance of newspapers playing a watchdog role in society and the gap in that role that community newspapers can help fill.

Professor Jeffres said in their watchdog role, newspapers pay attention to public institutions such as City Council and the Mayor's Office. They did routine coverage of public bodies. In a recent online streaming of the County Council meeting, Jeffres said he noticed only two people were watching. While the minutes of City Council Meetings and School Board are available online, with staff cutbacks at the daily newspaper, often no one is covering these meetings. "The watchdog is not watching. That concerns me," said Jeffres.

Jeffres said neighborhood newspapers can help fill that gap. He noted that the *Plain Press* over the years has provided coverage of the School Board and the Bond Accountability Committee meetings.

Jeffres said a survey he conducted of community newspapers found that they are doing fine, unlike many daily newspapers. Community newspapers strengthen the attachment of people to their community. People that read community papers show stronger ties to their community, said Jeffres. The loss of a neighborhood newspaper is an indication of the decline of a neighborhood, he said.

Jeffres called for a sustaining of efforts by the community press and a revitalization of the daily press so newspapers can continue their service that is vital to a democracy.

Jeffres said, newspapers stimulate community engagement and are needed for the good of democracies. "When no one is watching, that's when corruption occurs," he noted.

Rich Weiss, President of the Neighborhood and Community Media Association of Greater Cleveland and the publisher of the *Tremont*, talked about the erosion of trust in news sources that readers have in the era of fake news. He said while Americans have only modest trust of news sources, they do trust local news sources. He noted that local community papers are more re-

lated to that type of fact checking. Even if you decide to skip all outside festivities this season and just kick back with family or friends, it doesn't mean that you should show up in your pajamas. Embrace the warm, fuzzy feeling of love by wearing cozy knits and chunky garments. A knee length sweater dress with patterned tights is just as comfy as an oversized sweater and a pair of boyfriend fit jeans. Accessorize with festive earrings and lip gloss because selfies will be taken.

Still have questions about what to wear for your upcoming holiday soiree? Shoot me a line or two ladysilk@thehouseoffly.com and let's talk about it!

sponsive to the community's needs and allow people to be close to the source of their news. He noted that the newly formed Neighborhood and Community Media Association is a network of community newspapers and local media networking and sharing resources to help assure that local media organizations thrive in Cleveland.

Bob Jacob, Managing Editor of the *Cleveland Jewish News*, a weekly newspaper serving Cleveland's Jewish Community, said the newspaper is a nonprofit corporation that formed in 1964 from the merger of two previous Jewish newspapers. The *Cleveland Jewish News* covers elections, but does not endorse candidates. It has a Board of Trustees that services in an advisory role and doesn't influence coverage. Jacob says the mission of the paper is to cover local and national news that affects the Jewish community as well as the cultural life of the community.

Jacob said the *Cleveland Jewish News* is more than a 52 week a year newspaper. He noted the newspaper's website at: www.cjn.org, six magazines that the *Cleveland Jewish News* publishes as well as a directory it publishes of Who's Who in the Jewish community.

George Rodrigue, Editor of the *Plain Dealer* since January of 2015, shared some of his background. Rodrigue served as assistant news director at a TV station in Dallas and as managing editor of The Dallas Morning News prior to coming to Cleveland. During his tenure at the Dallas Morning News his staff won a Pulitzer Prize.

Rodrigue said it is important for a society to create a set of facts we all can agree upon. He said the *Plain Dealer* now covers mostly local news. He said that with the declining resources from advertising, the newspaper's ability to do what it did in the past, is less.

Rodrigue encouraged college students at the Town Hall whom may be soon looking for jobs in journalism to "develop a rare skill that people older than you do not have."

Rodrigue discussed the dilemma of how to get online subscribers to pay for content. He called for a "flight to quality" and coverage that is relevant to readers as a route to follow. He said, "If things matter enough to you, you'll pay us money."



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Monday, November 19, 2018; Lebanon Day Celebration, Grand Rotunda, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside: Anthony Chayeb, age 3 1/2, waves a Lebanese flag.

DEPARTMENT OF AGING

sure the boys walked on the other side of the street when passing Cogswell Hall and warned the five Mulgrew boys saying, "don't even touch a blade of grass" at Cogswell Hall. McNamara said she recently visited an outdoor party at Cogswell Hall that featured live music out on

the lawn with Great Lakes' beer. She said she sent a photo to her cousins.

McNamara shared a story on how she became a geriatric social worker. She said she returned to Cleveland in the year 2000 after working in Kentucky. Her father was sick, and the commute to go visit him

was too long. She had an Americorp award and used it to go to graduate school at CWRU's Mandel School. When it came time to choose a concentration, McNamara said the lines for children, youth and family social work tables were very long, but no one was at the aging table. She said she felt sorry for the guy sitting at the aging table, so she went over there. Prior to talking to him, McNamara said she thought of geriatric social work as working in a nursing home, which didn't appeal to her. She said she learned that day that only 5% of people over the age of 65 live in nursing homes. 95% live in the community and want to stay there. She said that conversation changed the rest of her career.

McNamara said she went on to work with homeless senior adults at Fairhill Partners' Senior Guest House and wrote her graduate thesis on the "Gift and challenge of family care." McNamara said she became the lead social worker for the Cleveland Department of Aging in 2008 and two years ago became the Director of the Department of Aging.

Citing some statistics on Cleveland's population, McNamara said there are 70,000 older adults in Cleveland which represents 17% of the current population of the city. McNamara said current population projections indicate that by the year 2030 there will be more people over age 60 than under age 60. She said this is due to a combination of factors — family sizes are smaller than they used to be, and the baby boomers are aging.

McNamara said the City of Cleveland is the first city in the state of Ohio to apply to the World Health Organization to be recognized as an Age Friendly City.

McNamara said the Cleveland Department of Aging shouldn't be the only place you call for resources. She stressed the importance of using the network of resources available to seniors. She said the State of Ohio has an Office on Aging and each county in Ohio has an Area Agency on Aging. Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging serves the five county Greater Cleveland area. McNamara said Cuyahoga County also has the Cuyahoga County Office of Senior and Adult Services.

McNamara passed out a booklet published by the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging titled *2018 Greater Cleveland Older Adults... the Resource Guide*. She said the book has definitions of terms such as Assisted Living, Geriatric Assessments and definitions of various medical specialists and lists places that offer such services. She also had pamphlets from a number of agencies that serve seniors and individuals with disabilities living in Cleveland. She said all these resources are regularly available at the Department of Aging.

Director McNamara stressed that the City of Cleveland Department of Aging is just part of a network of services that can help seniors stay in their homes and remain independent. She noted that Senior Centers such as the Hispanic Senior Center

on Detroit Avenue and the West Side Community House at W. 93rd and Lorain are part of that aging network. She said the City of Cleveland has 94 Senior Specific housing options. She offered some examples in the neighborhood such as Kirby Manor and Colman Court. She noted some of these buildings have eligibility based on income.

Other programs in the network assist residents in signing up for Medicaid and Medicare, or they provide health and wellness services such as diabetes self-management training.

McNamara sees one role of the Cleveland Department of Aging is to help people to gain access to the network of services available to senior citizens and persons with long term disabilities. She said that part of the job of the thirty people working in the Department of Aging is to "keep people in the community as long as possible." She said this is what people have said they want.

The Cleveland Department of Aging, located on the 2nd floor at 75 Erieview Plaza, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. — 5 p.m. The phone number is 216-664-2833.

McNamara says outreach workers at the Department of Aging respond to the needs for services in four areas: social services, home repair/maintenance, safety and health and wellness.

To help people stay in their homes, McNamara says the Cleveland Department of Aging offers information and assistance to connect people to a network of providers offering various services to seniors and persons with disabilities. For example, she noted one partner, the Anderson Center of Maximum Accessible Housing of Ohio which helps to show people modifications they can make to their home to help them to age in place.

Options Counselors at the Department of Aging can help people to explore what their preferences are in case they do need nursing care, assisted living or a continuous care community in the future. Economic Security Counselors can help with home foreclosure, credit card debt and economic case management.

Benefits Assistance staff members can help do a benefits checkup to help individuals learn what local, state and federal benefits they may qualify to receive and help individuals to apply for those benefits.

McNamara said seniors can also call United Way at 211 for contact phone numbers for various senior services. She also noted that the Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program provides free health information and services for people with Medicare.

Eviction Prevention services are also provided by the Department of Aging to referrals received from Housing Court. When seniors become homeless, the Senior Guest House is an option to refer seniors for assistance.

For seniors that are already in a nursing home and would like to return to the community, the Home Choice program at the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging and

Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential can provide assistance.

Senior Transportation Connection (STC) is a nonprofit organization that the Department of Aging contracts with to provide transportation to Cleveland residents 60 years of age or older. McNamara says after residents have signed up for the service with the Department of Aging with a phone call to 664-2833, they can contact Senior Transportation Connection directly to schedule one trip per week in a white, wheelchair accessible van. The cost for the service is \$1.25 each way and is available to take individuals to locations 10 miles or less from their houses. McNamara says Cleveland seniors use the service for medical appointments, shopping or visits to the cemetery.

McNamara said individuals can call their doctor's office to get an estimate as to how long appointments normally take to give STC an estimated time to pick them up after the appointment is over. She said STC provides person centered, elbow to elbow service. McNamara suggested that seniors looking for a part-time job also consider becoming a driver for STC. She said the organization is always looking for drivers.

The home repair services of the Department of Aging include connecting seniors to programs such as the federal Housing and Urban Development Department Senior Home Assistance Program and to the services of groups such as Neighborhood Housing Services and Community Housing Solutions. McNamara said most home repair programs have income qualifications. She said Department of Aging staff can help determine what programs residents qualify for and also connect people to resources such as Angie's List and the Better Business Bureau to help them find trustworthy contractors for various home repair jobs.

The Department of Aging also provides individuals age 60 or older, or individuals age 18-59 with a disability, with services such as grass cutting, snow removal and leaf raking, said McNamara. She noted that the program is limited to 800 people and is on a first come first served basis and gives priority to individuals age 85 or more or those with wheelchair ramps. Applications are available each year in mid-February. McNamara said she would like to see community networks develop in Cleveland that would engage youth in providing snow shoveling services for seniors during heavy snow storms.

Several services by the Department of Aging have to do with safety. One such service is Cleveland Care Calls which makes automated calls to seniors with safety information.

Another safety service is the provision of File of Life forms to be placed on the refrigerator in the home to give information to Emergency Medical technicians that are called to your home. The form has space for some basic health information, insurance information, emergency contacts, pet care contacts and even a space to list a medical alert company so the service can be turned off while you are in the hospital.

McNamara said she would like to see every Cleveland senior citizen have a File of Life on their refrigerator. She said the information provided to medics when seconds matter can make a difference. "It is hard for medics to go into a house and know nothing about you," she said. She said copies of the form are available from the Cleveland Department of Aging in Portable Document Format (PDF) in English and Spanish. To receive a copy of the File of Life form send an email to the Department of Aging at aging@ continued on page 7



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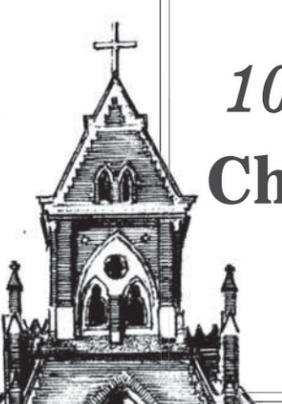
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BOND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

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ception of a program at the Spanish American Committee designed by the Hispanic Contractors Association, most of the training programs failed to track their graduates to see if they obtained jobs in the building trades after graduation.

Hara Auvil said the most successful construction training program is at the Spanish American Committee that has placed 40 graduates in construction trade jobs since 2017. She said the program not only tracks its graduates but offers a lot of support and hand holding to get its graduates into jobs.

Hara Auvil noted that the Construction Employers Association contracts with organizations such as the Urban League and Tri-C to recruit and train construction workers. If successful in their training, recruits become members of various trade unions and work for local contractors.

An organization that once helped women to enter the construction trades, Hard Hatted Women, is no longer viable reported Hara Auvil.

In her report, Hara Auvil noted that Cuyahoga Community College offers a Pre-Apprenticeship Training (PAT) Certificate Program that was created to encourage minorities and women to enter the trades. In the program's last class, 10 out of 12 students graduated and seven of those students entered the building trades apprenticeship programs, said Hara Auvil. A number of employment programs in Cleveland such as the Urban League, Spanish American Committee, El Barrio and Towards Employment partner with Tri-C in this PAT program. Graduates of the program are eligible for union apprenticeships.

CMUSD's High School Construction Program at Max Hayes was also a subject of discussion by the Bond Accountability Committee. Hara Auvil reported that in 2018, only 3 graduates of the program entered into the construction trades after graduation. She said that not every student that goes to Max Hayes, wants to go into the trades. They may be attending the school because it is close to home, or for other reasons.

Board members discussed the challenge of recruiting eighth grade students that wanted to be in the construction trades. Dr. Thomas of CMUSD said a good deal of effort goes into making sure eighth grade students choosing a high school are aware of all the choices available among CMUSD high schools. BAC Board Member Nancy Schuster questioned the effectiveness of the current high school choice program in getting students into the construction program that want to pursue one of the building trades.

BAC board members wondered how CMUSD could become more effective. There was also discussion of how to make the process of getting into union apprenticeships easier.

AGING

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city.cleveland.oh.us or call 216-664-2833.

The Department of Aging also hosts a number of Health and Wellness events such as Senior Day and a Senior Walk where vendors connect with seniors and seniors can connect with each other and do some networking. Some Cleveland recreation centers also offer special classes or programs for seniors. McNamara noted one program which Bike Cleveland held at four different Cleveland recreation centers where it provided examples of age friendly bicycles and tricycles, safety tips for cycling and a share the road refresher course.

BAC Executive Director Hara Auvil said she suggested to the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council that each of its member unions place their application for apprenticeships on their website. She said they came back with a rather lame excuse that not all the unions had the same information technology capacity.

Hara Auvil also noted that the unions did not track the percentage of women and minorities in their membership and refused to share data on membership characteristics with the public.

In addition to the labor force agreement, the Bond Accountability listened to a report by Interim Chief Information Officer Curtis Timmons on the E-Rate program that reimburses schools for cost of information technology.

In the past, CMUSD failed to make E-Rate reports on time to get reimbursed by the federal government and there were problems in verifying if the equipment they received was the equipment for which they contracted.

Timmons explained that under the new system, CMUSD no longer purchases equipment but rather services from a contractor to provide information technology systems to the schools under specified criterion. Timmons explained that under this system, the contractor purchases all the hardware needed to provide the services outlined in the contract. Instead of CMUSD putting money upfront and seeking reimbursement from the federal government, the contractor now is doing that, and the contractor then seeks reimburse-



PHOTO BY MICHAEL OAKAR

Saturday, November 17, 2018; Neighborhood Family Practice's Kids Cooking Class, Urban Community School, 4909 Lorain Avenue: Neighborhood Family Practice Director of Community Engagement Megan Meister engages with children as she mixes ingredients for a fruit pizza. Meister says at other stations at the Kids Cooking Class made no bake granola bars, snack attack trail mix and healthy wraps.

ment with the help of CMUSD.

CMUSD Chief of Operations Patrick Zohn provided the BAC with an update on how CMUSD was approaching the revision of its Master Facilities Plan. He said the goal is to move away from a master plan that is based on what the state will fund, and to move toward long term facility planning based on the needs of the school district. The goal is to have the Academic Program staff and the Facilities Operations staff work together in the planning process to make sure school facilities are de-

signed to best serve the academic program planned for the school. He said a consultant has been hired to make sure that existing buildings and neighborhood demographics are included in the planning process as to where new schools may be needed and what the optimal size of school building populations should be.

Zohn said letters have gone out to stakeholders in the community and CMUSD staff hope to interview people as part of the data gathering effort. Zohn says community meetings will be held after the first of the year

with the goal of meeting people in locations where they routinely meet. He said social media will also be employed to reach out to the community to get input from residents into the school facility planning process. Zohn says he hopes to have a long-term planning document ready to submit to the Cleveland Board of Education by April of 2019.

Editor's Note: For more information about the Bond Accountability Commission and for copies of reports it issues, visit the Bond Accountability Commission website at: www.bondaccountability.org.

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LEBANON DAY CELEBRATION

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that while Lebanon is celebrating its 75th anniversary of the country's independence, the Lebanese people have been around for thousands of years.

The American Lebanese Community Council (ALCC) hosted the event which featured a presentation of a planned Lebanese Cultural Garden; speakers; awards; a catered Lebanese dinner; entertainment; and dancing.

Festivities began with Mistress of Ceremonies Leana Orra greeting the crowd, followed by a presentation of the colors by members of the United States Army. Richard Anter III sang the American National Anthem and Father Naim Khalil, Pastor of St. Elias Melkite Church, sang the Lebanese National Anthem.

Following the singing of the two national anthems, Monsignor William Bonczewski, Pastor of Our Lady of Cedars Church, and Imam Ramez Istambouli, a Professor at Case Western Reserve University, each offered a prayer.

Guests at the dinner were welcomed to Cleveland City Hall by Mayor Frank Jackson and City Council representatives Kerry McCormack and Matt Zone. County Executive Armond Budish spoke briefly acknowledging the contributions of the local Lebanese community.

American Lebanese Community Council Chairman Pierre Bejjani presented awards acknowledging the contributions of three individuals to the Lebanese community.

Natalie Saikaly Ronayne was honored with an award acknowledging her contributions to promoting and preserving Lebanese culture and heritage in the community. Saikaly Ronayne, a resident of the Edgewater neighborhood and the Chief Development Officer for the Cleveland Metroparks, participated in the planning and design of the Lebanese Cultural Garden proposal. ALCC Chairman Pierre Bejjani, in presenting the award, thanked Saikaly Ronayne for her participation in the endeavor.

The next honoree, James Kassouf, a Cleveland area businessman and real estate developer, received an award acknowledging his generosity and community involvement. Kassouf's son Joseph accepted the award on his behalf. In presenting the award, Bejjani praised Kassouf for his advocacy in Washington D.C. on behalf of Lebanon.

The third award went to the late Dr. Mahmoud M. Orra, who founded and practiced for many years at Westshore Family Practice in Cleveland. In presenting the award to Dr. Orra's family members, Bejjani noted Dr. Orra's compassion and service to patients with limited resources – noting Dr. Orra frequently offered free health care to low income patients. The ALCC award also noted Dr. Orra's efforts to provide free healthcare to remote villages in Lebanon.

Following the presentation of

awards, Julia Bejjami outlined plans for a future Lebanese Cultural Garden as part of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens in Rockefeller Park along Martin Luther King Boulevard. Julia Bejjami said the plans for the cultural garden have been completed and submitted to the City of Cleveland. ALCC is awaiting a permit so they can begin work. She said the garden will feature an iconic cedar sculpture as the main focus of the garden, a story board wall, a cedar grove, lighting, a seating wall and a gathering area. Bejjami encouraged those present to make donations or to sign up as volunteers to help with

the effort to create and maintain the garden.

Following the presentation of the plans for the Lebanese Cultural Garden, the Ajyal Dance Group entertained the crowd with a performance of Lebanese dancing.

Dinner followed the performance, with Tabanji Catering providing guests with Lebanese dishes such as fattoush, stuffed grape leaves, kibbeh, hummus, and baba ghanouj, as well as, Lebanese pastries for dessert.

The evening ended with a raffle while guests danced a traditional Lebanese dance, the dabke, to the beat of a drum provided by Num Num Media.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Monday, November 19, 2018; Lebanon Day Celebration, Grand Rotunda, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside: Members of the Ajyal Dance Group entertain the crowd.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Monday, November 19, 2018; Lebanon Day Celebration, Grand Rotunda, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside: A member of the Ajyal Dance Group entertains the crowd.

CLEVELANDERS FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT

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says. Neither provide the necessary funding to improve transit service.

Job sprawl across the county has complicated the transit system. Without a centralized, or several centralized stations, the system has to grow to accommodate the sprawl. The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), a public transit agency serving Columbus, Ohio, completely overhauled their transit system in May 2018. Since that overhaul, ridership in June of 2018 increased by 3.6 percent over that of June 2017.

COTA's redesign of its network doubled the number of high-frequency buses that arrive every 15 minutes on major streets. The system offers more weekend service and service to more jobs. It also added

additional weekend service and service to 103,000 more residents within a ¼ mile of high-frequency service. 18,000 more residents within ¼ mile of all-day service (529,000 total) now use the system.

Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority ridership plunged to a record low of 39.6 million in 2017--a drop of more than 4 million riders from the previous year. The decline of 9.5 per cent was the largest single-year drop since 2010. The 2017 numbers were affected by a budget decision to reduce routes and increase fares in 2016, said RTA Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Stephen Bitto.

In January 2018, the Cuyahoga County Regional Transportation Advisory Subcommittee submitted a final report focused primarily on

replacement of lost allocations from federal funds for public transportation in the state Transportation Bill.

“We need real transit reform. Clevelanders For Public Transit is about transit essentials.”

-- Clevelanders for Public Transit Coordinating Committee Chair Christopher Stocking

The report cited a continued pattern of inadequate support for public transportation, and the failure of the State of Ohio to make up for the loss of sales tax revenue that transit authorities once received from the taxing of Medicaid Managed Care Organizations. With the taxing of those services no longer allowed, the result is that the RTA faces a catastrophic \$20 million annual loss in revenue.

Largely, a political document, the Transportation Advisory Subcommittee did not explore RTA operations in detail. However, the committee suggested that beyond system redesign, “GCRTA may find operational efficiencies in areas such as improved technology, process analysis, and collaboration with municipal government. Technologies in areas such as fuel efficiency, optimal scheduling of preventive maintenance, and matching services to demand level, are constantly improving and will provide opportunities for operational efficiencies.”

“That’s not good enough,” said CPT Coordinating Committee Chair Stocking. “We need real transit reform. Clevelanders For Public Transit is about transit essentials. We’re here to increase our vision about public transportation. We’re all volunteers at CPT and it’s been difficult to get a meeting with city officials to discuss reform.”

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