



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL
Ward 15 Councilwoman Jenny Spencer has decided not to run for reelection in 2025. See related story on page 4.

Plain Press

Cleveland’s Westside Newspaper

Despite passage of the levy, Cleveland schools face “tough work ahead”

by Chuck Hoven

At the November 6, 2024, Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) Board of Education Business meeting Cleveland School Board Chair Sara Elaquad praised the efforts of the Cleveland Teachers Union, CMSD staff and Board members, endorsers, businesses and supporters that helped to pass the Issue 49 levy and bond issue that Cleveland voters overwhelmingly supported

in the November 5th General Election. Elaquad, a resident of the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood, said she “deeply believes it is the responsibility of adults to make sure children have everything they need to learn and succeed.” Elaquad noted the school district still has, “Tough work ahead.” But she noted that the school district was in a “stronger position because of the work of voters.” CMSD Chief Executive Officer

Warren Morgan expressed a feeling of “overwhelming gratitude for the continuation of support” from Cleveland voters. Later in the meeting a five-year budget forecast presented by CMSD Chief Financial Officer Kevin Stockdale revealed the “tough work ahead” that school district faces. Stockdale’s report revealed that the \$52 million dollar a year levy the voters just pasted the day before, only will buy the school district another year before current levels of expenditures and income will result in a huge negative fund balance. Before the levy, the five-year forecast predicted CMSD would face a negative \$110 million unencumbered fund balance at the end of the 2026-2027 school year. Now with the levy, the projection is a negative unencumbered fund balance of \$96.2 million at the end of the 2027-2028 school year.

Stockdale explained to the Board of Education, the Chief Executive Officer and the public step by step how this negative cash balance would occur.

Base Cost of Education

Stockdale outlined some implications from how the State of Ohio calculates funds it sends to the CMSD that will

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: Festival attendees Gina, Ellie, Francesca, and Franny (with their dog Bruno) show off their festive costumes.

Cleveland voters approve CMSD School Levy and Bond Issue by a wide margin

by Chuck Hoven

Cleveland voters showed their support for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District(CMSD) with two out of every three voters giving their approval of the Issue 49 Bond Issue and Levy at the November 5th General Elections. Of the total 123,820 votes cast, 69,840 were for the Bond Issue and Levy and 34,429 were against the Bond Issue and Levy.

In their promotional materials in the campaign for the Bond Issue and Levy the campaign led by Citizens for Our Children’s Future noted the improvement in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s test scores on the Ohio Report Card where they outperformed both Columbus and Cincinnati public school system.

CMSD’s campaign mailing to Cleveland voters said passage of the levy

would help the School District to “Keep improving schools in every neighborhood; Prepare students for good jobs, careers and college; Keep our students safe; Provide much needed mental health services; stop millions in harmful cuts; and keep raising the graduation rate and building skills students need.”

The promotional materials also talked about the cost of the levy and bond continued on page 3



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: A stilt walker in a striped costume walks in the Skulls and Skeleton parade outside of the Cleveland Public Theatre on Detroit Ave. in the Gordon Square Arts District.

Issue 55 passed. Now What?

by Bruce Checefsky

Cuyahoga County voters overwhelmingly approved Issue 55, increasing the cigarette tax from a 30-cent per-pack tax, first passed in 2006, to 70 cents per pack. The tax increase would raise an estimated \$160 million over 10 years for public arts funding. Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC), the governmental body that administers the arts funding, said in a press release issued by the group’s executive director, Jill Paulsen, following the victory that CAC will continue to be a “reliable resource and provide core support for the nonprofits that make our community such a special place.”

Local arts advocates and leaders of major cultural institutions in the region welcomed the election results. There was no organized opposition to the ballot levy.

Last year, controversy over individual grants to artists caused a raucous atmosphere at several public meetings, forcing the agency to review the grant-

ing process and increase the number and amount of grants available to artists seeking financial support. Jeremy V. Johnson, President and CEO of Assembly for the Arts, was tasked with creating a way to include more artists in receiving funds. While CAC only grants directly to nonprofits, the agency’s board voted to increase the amount allocated to Assembly for the Arts to support individual artists. Johnson created an advisory board.

The CAC board voted in December 2023 to approve \$400,000 to the Assembly to manage the Support for Artists program for 2024, adding another \$100,000 after former board president Nancy Mendez acknowledged the CAC had not paid out grants to individual artists in three non-consecutive years totaling several hundred thousand dollars. The additional money gives Johnson \$500,000 for individual artists and artist support programs. Most grants require an application and support project-based

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: A festival attendee stands next to a float featuring a pair of skeletons. Tradition holds that on the Day of the Dead, the line between the living and the dead blurs, allowing dead people to visit with their still-living relatives.



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: A person dressed in a colorful butterfly costume marches in the Skulls and Skeletons procession during CPT's Day of the Dead festivities.

ARTS
ARTISTS AT THE TWIST: Come help us celebrate our 36th annual holiday arts show at the Cleveland Twist and Drill Building (1242 E 49th St.) on Saturday, December 7 from 10 am to 6 pm and Sunday, December 8 from 11 am to 5 pm. Visit artistsatthetwist.com for more information.

ARTS COMPETITIONS: Artists worldwide are invited to participate in Ten Moir Gallery's 3rd Faces and Botanical Art Competitions, both taking place this December. These exciting competitions are open to creators aged 18 and over, welcoming both 2D and 3D mediums across all art styles and techniques. The deadline: December 31, with up to \$650 in cash and prizes awarded to the Best in Show winner. To learn more, visit tenmoirgallery.com/art-competitions-open-call.

ARTS AND CULTURE NETWORKING NIGHT: Neighbor Up and its community partners invite you to hear from Kamisha Thomas, co-founder of Returning Artist Guild in Columbus, Ohio, and enjoy a performance by Journee Bleu, a lyricist, singer, songwriter, actress, and poet.

It's also a chance to network with other artists and learn about Spark Grants for artists, arts and culture nonprofits, and creative businesses in need of funding. See you Wednesday, December 4 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Lounges (1547 St. Clair Ave NE).

LATIN SOCIAL DANCE YOUTH PROGRAM: Become part of the Latin Social Dance family at Julia de Burgos Cultural Arts Center (2800 Archwood Ave). We're looking for new students, ages 12-18, to learn traditional dance, salsa, and bachata this fall and winter in our youth performance group, which meets on Thursdays from 6 pm to 8 pm. Our winter session will end with a performance at our Parrandón Navideño event on Saturday, December 14. Register at juliadeburgos.org/calendar or call 216-894-5664 to learn more.

ST. PAUL'S STREET STUDIO (LOCATION CHANGED): Join in to share music, poetry/spoken word in a peaceful atmosphere of respect. You are welcome to add your voice or simply listen and provide support. Piano, mics, drums, and acoustic guitars provided along with an encouraging circle to listen. For more information, contact

Ian Heisey at heisey2140@sbcglobal.net or at 216-973-1486. Please note that this month's street studio will be from 1-3 pm on Saturday, December 7 at Fairview Gardens Apartments (3207 Franklin Blvd, near Kentucky Garden) and not at its usual location at St. Paul's Community Church.

CITY SERVICES
CALL CENTER AND WEBSITE FOR NON-EMERGENCY CITY SERVICES: For information or help with City of Cleveland services visit clevelandohio.gov/311 or call 311 (216-66-2000).

FILE A POLICE REPORT ONLINE by calling 833-461-0144. This will prompt you to enter your 10-digit phone number followed by the # sign. A text/SMS message with a direct link to the website page will then be sent to your cell phone. Reports that can be filed online include property damage, misdemeanor theft, theft from a vehicle, bicycle theft, lost property, and petty theft (value under \$1,000). Reports that can't be done online are crash reports and reports where there is a named suspect.

SAFE SMART CLE: For information on how to register your home or business camera in a partnership with the Cleveland Department of Public Safety contact Camera Sharing Access Program Advocate Gbrown3@clevelandohio.gov.

COMMUNITY
ANNUAL COMMUNITY AWARDS: Northwest Neighborhoods will present a variety of awards to community members at its annual meeting early next year. Nominations for the various awards are now being accepted and are due by December 31. Residents of the Cudell, Detroit Shoreway, or Edgewater neighborhoods are eligible. To learn more or to nominate someone, visit nwneighborhoods.org/awards.

FREE CHORE SERVICE: During the winter months, staff members from Cleveland's Department of Aging are available to do limited indoor chores for Cleveland seniors and adults with disabilities. The appointments are one hour in duration. There is no charge for this service, but we ask that you provide your own cleaning supplies and equipment. Some tasks we can help with: sweeping, mopping, and vacuuming, cleaning the stove or refrigerator,



dusting, and cleaning the bathroom. Some things we don't do: fold laundry, change bed linens or clean bedrooms, painting, or electrical work. This is not an exhaustive list. To learn more, call 216-664-3998 or 216-664-4694

KNITTING CIRCLE: Join the Lunch-time Knitting Circle on the second Wednesday of each month from noon to 1 pm at the Public Administration Library (Room 100 inside Cleveland City Hall). This month's meeting will be on Wednesday, December 11.

TREMONT THINK AND DRINK: Join us for an engaging book discussion while enjoying your favorite beverage at Lincoln Park Pub (2609 W 14 St) on Monday, December 9 at 7 pm. This month, we will be discussing *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century* by Jessica Bruder.

DONATIONS NEEDED
RED CROSS BLOOD AND PLATELET DONATIONS: By scheduling and keeping appointments TODAY, donors can help provide for those in immediate need of lifesaving care. To schedule an appointment to donate, download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

WARM UP CLEVELAND: Do you sew, knit, crochet or quilt? Donate handmade items at any Cleveland Public Library location year-round to help neighbors in need. For more information, contract Outreach and Programming Services at 216-623-2921 or ops@cpl.org. All donations will be distributed to local charities. For more information, including a full list of participating charities, visit cpl.org/warmupcle.

FOOD
COMMUNITY SHARE-A-MEAL: Please join us for a free meal on Wednesday, December 4 and Wednesday, December 18 at St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, 10205 Lorain Ave. All are welcome. Join us in the cafeteria and enter through the rear door. Doors open at 4:30 pm for coffee, appetizers, and catching up with friends. Dinner will be served at 5:30 pm. A mini food pantry is available on occasion. Community meals are held the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

FOOD ASSISTANCE: Apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other public benefits over the phone at: 216-738-2067 or text FOOD to 63566 for information regarding SNAP applications, food pantries, free produce and hot meals.

FREE FRESH PRODUCE is available at Orchard STEM School (4200 Bailey Ave.), via the monthly mobile food pantry sponsored by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank the first Wednesday of every month. This month, the pantry will be held on Wednesday December 4. While you're there, don't forget to join us for our Parent TownHall Meeting, located in the Inquiry Garden. It is a great opportunity to offer your input and feedback, as well as address your concerns, to help our staff understand how to best serve you and your family. **FREE HOT BREAKFAST:** Enjoy a complimentary breakfast courtesy of Bridge City Church at 3381 Fulton Rd every Saturday. Delight in church-made eggs, sausage, grits, and donuts—all for free! Breakfast is served between 8 am and 11 am.

HEALTH
CLEVELAND CARE CALLS is a free service offered by Cleveland's Department of Aging and Public Safety that provides regularly scheduled automatic calls to check on a person's well-being. The program is open to all

residents aged 60 or older or to adults with disabilities aged 18-59. You can select the date and time of the call, between 7 am and 11 am, Mondays thru Fridays. The automatic system will make several attempts to call you in a thirty-minute period. If there is no response, the department will contact anyone you have designated as an emergency contact, who can then decide if they want to do a home visit to check on you. You must complete an application to participate in this program. Contact the program's director to sign up at 216-664-6316 or 216-664-2833.
THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY WARM LINE is a free, confidential phone service that offers mental health support and is available 24 hours a day. Call 440-886-5950.
DEPRESSION AND SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD): If you or someone you love is struggling with depression and/or thinking about suicide, get help now. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 988, is a free resource, available 24 hours a day for anyone who is in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. You can also contact the Ohio Crisis Text Line 24/7. Text the keyword "4hope" to 741 741 to be connected to a trained crisis counselor within 5 minutes.

HOLIDAY EVENTS
CLEVELAND BAZAAR: Cleveland's longest-running indie craft fair returns for its twentieth year at 78th Street Studios (1300 W 78th St). Come check out crafts and goods for sale from over 125 Bazaar artists, resident artist studios, food trucks and so much more. Saturday, December 14 from 10 am to 9 pm and Sunday, December 15 from 10 am to 4 pm.

MAY DUGAN TREE LIGHTING: Join us for our 15th annual tree lighting ceremony on Thursday, December 5, 5:30 pm-8 pm, at the May Dugan Center (4115 Bridge Ave). Treats, hot cocoa, music and singing. Santa will be in attendance. Free event. Donations welcome.

NUTCRACKER EXTRAVAGANZA returns Friday, December 6th to Cleveland Public Library's Carnegie West Branch (1900 Fulton Rd). Join us for a performance from Dance Arts by Regina as they share excerpts of the holiday favorite, "The Nutcracker". This 45-minute interactive presentation will enchant both children and adults as they are swept away to the Land of the Sweets along with the dancers. There will also be tree ornaments to decorate, holiday displays to browse and check out, and a pizza party after the performance provided by Ohio City Inc. Be sure to read "The Night Before the Nutcracker" in the StoryWalk too! The event starts at 3 pm, and the performance begins at 4 pm.

PARRANDÓN NAVIDEÑO: Celebrate Latino heritage with family, friends, and community this holiday season at Julia De Burgos Cultural Arts Center (2800 Archwood Ave.) on Saturday, December 14 from 3 pm to 5:30 pm. Enjoy cultural performances, a fashion show, kids activities, food, gifts from Santa and the Three Kings, and much more! Contact us at info@juliadeburgos.org or call (216) 894-5664 with questions.

PEOPLE'S BUDGET HOLIDAY PARTY: Join People's Budget Cleveland at our all-coalition holiday party in AsiaTown on Wednesday, December 11 from 6 - 8pm. Let us know you're coming by filling out the form at this link <https://tinyurl.com/mr6tdwvt>, and we'll follow up with you with a location.

QUEER THE HALLS: Join the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland on Saturday, December 7 for its annual LGBTQ+ artisan market. New this year: the event will be held at both The LGBT Center (6705 Detroit Ave.) and the Near West Theatre across the street, to accommodate growing demand.

THRIVE FOR CHANGE HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE: Join us for our second annual holiday open house, sponsored by United Healthcare on Wednesday, December 11 at Thrive for Change (11002 Detroit Ave). This event will feature: tours of our harm reduction space and information about our impact, lunch or dinner and other refreshments including gluten free and vegan options, raffle baskets, free harm reduction supplies

(naloxone, fentanyl testing strips, etc.), and networking opportunities. This event is free to attend. We just ask that all attendees RSVP to either the Lunch or Dinner time frame for capacity and food planning purposes at <https://tinyurl.com/26ch8e75>

PARENTING
FAMILY CONNECTIONS engages families with young children to nurture social connections, enhance child development, and improve school readiness. Family Connections provides parenting support and educational opportunities for families with children from birth through age six. Year-round free programs and services for families and children to play, learn, and grow together. For more information visit: www.FamilyConnections1.org or call 216-921-2023.

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION TIPS are available by searching for Child Lead Poisoning at www.odh.ohio.gov.

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY offers K-12 programs including National Youth Sports Program, Provost Scholars Program, Project STEP-UP, TRIO Upward Bound and TRIO Talent Search. For more information call Angela Cain at 216-368-5152 or contact her by email at precollege@case.edu.

RESOURCES
LINKING EMPLOYMENT, ABILITIES AND POTENTIAL (LEAP) works to advance a society of equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of disability. For more information visit www.leapinfo.org, call 216-696-2716 or email info@leapinfo.org.
LEGAL AID offers free assistance to people and groups with low income. Learn how to make a Rent Deposit with the Court when housing issues are a problem. For more information call the Tenant Information Line at 216-861-5955.

FIRST TIME HOME BUYING WORKSHOP: First Federal Lakewood, in collaboration with Northwest Neighborhoods, is hosting a free financial workshop entitled "First Time Homebuying: What You Need To Know" on Wednesday, December 11 from 6 pm to 7 pm in the Community Room at Aspen Place (6016 Lorain Ave).

FOOD BANK RESOURCE CENTER: Welcome to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's new Community Resource Center (15500 South Waterloo Rd), a one-stop shop for community members where they can find food assistance and a variety of resources from our community partners to help with things like housing, employment, and health-care. For more information, call our help center at 216-738-2067 or email Ranesha Thomas at rthomas@clevelandfoodbank.org.
PROJECT RED CORD NIGHT OUT: Join The Renee Jones Empowerment Center for Project Red Cord Night Out on Friday, December 20 at 5 pm at W. 73rd and Lorain Ave. Free and open to the community, the project offers food, a mobile medical clinic, personal care items, and access to partner organizations. For details, contact The Renee Jones Empowerment Center at 216-417-0823.

SENIORS
CLEVELAND DEPARTMENT OF AGING: Call 216-664-2833 for information about services.

CALL CUYAHOGA COUNTY ELDER ABUSE HOTLINE at 216-420-6700 to report suspected abuse.

TRANSPORTATION
FREE BUS PASSES: Pregnant or a new parent? RTA is now offering free weekly bus passes to pregnant mothers and to parents of children under one year old through its Baby

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proposals.

Mendez admitted in a public meeting last December that the organization had not paid out grants to individual artists in 2018 and 2019, and again in 2021. She said the artist’s money went into the general operating support. Mendez, currently the President and CEO at Starting Point, was replaced by Carolyn Isenhardt, Executive Director of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party.

County Executive Chris Ronayne nominated Leonard DiCosimo to serve on the five-member board of CAC for the term through March 31, 2027, and Gina Vernaci, former President and Chief Executive Officer of Playhouse Square, to serve through March 31, 2025. Both appointments confirmed earlier this year, a move meant to stabilize the publicly embarrassing display of upper management.

A report issued last year by ISO Arts Consulting, commissioned by CAC, and hired by the Assembly for the Arts, revealed an artist community expressing a wide range of emotions, including anger, exhaustion, frustration, hopelessness, and sadness related to a deep perception of disrespect to artists by CAC. The report, funded, in part, by the Gund Foundation, found overriding interpretations of CAC programmatic and funding choices and damaged community relations through deception, lying, and manipulation. Tensions broke out in the artist community following the release of the report.

Former board president and CAC board member Charna Sherman, an outspoken advocate for individual artist grants while serving on the organization, said in an email that the overwhelming support for Issue 55 “vindicates our community’s longstanding appreciation of and support for a vibrant arts ecosystem.”

“Now that there is time to breathe, CAC hopefully will be more responsive

to community concerns and priorities and specifically honor that these precious dollars are distributed to the arts and not unnecessary overhead,” said Sherman.

While some insiders believe approval of the ballot issue vindicates the organization, not so, said artist and community activist Liz Maugans. Maugans was central to mounting a campaign to hold the CAC board accountable for withholding grants to individual artists. She is currently a visiting professor at Cleveland State University and co-organizing Quest for Fest in 2025, an artist-led collective aiming to engage the NEO community with art, access, experience, and fun. She also curates exhibitions for YARDS Projects and Tinnerman Lofts.

“I’m exhausted by this broke ass sin tax,” said Maugans. “They pretend to be there for the public, but they operate in a vacuum.”

“Supporting the three-legged stool is a metaphor used by the Assembly for the Arts and CAC, which includes non-profits, creative businesses, and individual artists. This tax increase helps only one leg of that stool: the nonprofits,” she added. “The argument CAC continuously makes is that the trickle-down support of cultural non-profits financially benefits individual creatives. Nationally published data proves otherwise and shows a vast decrease of 25% in artists’ compensation.”

To find out more: <https://culturaldata.org/national-trends-2024/staffing-analysis>

Internationally recognized experimental filmmaker and artist Robert Banks, Jr., a long-time resident of the Tower Press in downtown Cleveland, said he has issues with taxing a substance that kills people more often used by the economically impoverished community and the elderly. He voted no.

“There are other ways of getting money for the arts other than taxing the nicotine community,” said Banks.

“I only know a handful of people under the age of thirty that smoke. Senior

citizens and members of marginalized communities will be forced into the additional tax burden. I’m not comfortable with that idea. Do the artists benefit from this? There is a lot of gray area there,” he said, adding, “I am glad it passed simply for the morale of the city, but it didn’t get my vote.”

Mike Gutierrez, artist and former owner of the 2020 West Schaaf Gallery + Studio, an inclusive and community-focused art studio and abstract gallery featuring local and regional emerging artists that closed during the pandemic, said in a text response that, when it came time to vote, he gave greater consideration to the impact the generated funds have on community-focused arts programming and supporting the newly developed distribution process with Assembly for the Arts.

“I know firsthand that the organizations and people running them have the community in mind; their intentions to inspire are genuine. With the Assembly now engaged in the process, I hope that the stream of arts funding finds its way into the hands of local artists who aren’t so connected in many ways,” he continued. “I’ll be watching how money is handled moving forward while advocating for and helping to identify new funding sources other than cigarette taxes to sustain local arts.”

Local businesses will have to adjust to the tax increases by selling cigarettes at a higher price. This is a problem for Nash, owner of the Professor Market in Tremont. The margin on the sale of cigarettes is often less than 8%, and, according to him, tobacco companies raise their prices four times a year. “I have no choice but to raise the prices,” said Nash. “I voted against the levy. I said no.”

Jonathan E. Petrea, independent political consultant and founder of Ascendant Communications and Ascendant Public Policy Group in Cleveland, said funding the arts is tricky. While tax levies are often necessary, he called Issue 55 a type of ballot emotional extortion. “Based on what I know, there has been



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: A participant dressed in a colorful cat mask marches in the annual Day of the Dead parade.

deception and slush funds created with a huge lack of transparency in how the tax dollars get allocated. A quasi-governmental agency, without elected officials,” he said, referring to the CAC, “with a lack of accountability, deceiving stakeholders is not how our tax dollars are to be handled.”

Petrea finds it alarming that people would vote for the levy with a 70% margin of victory without understanding the issues. “We individually as citizens have to look into the mirror and reflect upon how and why we cast our votes, especially when tax dollars are being used. When you have an entity that can operate without accountability, honesty, or good faith, they amass power that creates an entity with mission creep. Those intended to benefit from this tax do not end up as the main beneficiaries. The elite, those in charge, and their friends make money from the organization’s actual mission.”

CAC said it plans to invest millions of tax dollars in hundreds of organizations and support tens of thousands of programs that enhance education, enrich the quality of life, and support the local economy, according to its website. *Courtesy CoolCleveland*

CMSD SCHOOL LEVY AND BOND ISSUE

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issue. It noted the bond issue, a renewal would not increase the taxes currently paid by homeowners. It also noted that over half of the revenue raised by the levy would be paid by businesses. Also, the campaign literature pointed out that the levy, proposed prior to the recent property reevaluations would be based on the old property values, not the new ones from the new assessment. The mailing to residents said passage of the levy would mean a mid-value home in Cleveland would pay an additional \$3.73 per week in property tax.

In Cleveland City Council Wards that have voting precincts within the Plain Press service area, the support of the levy varied.

In Ward 3, which includes the Ohio City, most of the Downtown and Tremont neighborhoods and part of the Stockyard neighborhood, 6,961 voters

voted for Issue 49 and 2,326 voted against it. About 45% of registered voters voted on the issue with 9,287 weighing in out of 20,444 registered voters.

In Ward 11, which includes parts Edgewater, Cudell, West Boulevard, Jefferson and Bellaire-Puritas neighborhoods, 3,148 voters voted for Issue 49 and 2, 153 voted against the issue. In all, 5,301 of the 12,286 registered voters chose to vote on the issue, or 42.8% of the registered voters in Ward 11.

In Ward 12, which includes parts of Brooklyn Centre, Old Brooklyn, Tremont, and Slavic Village neighborhoods, 3,077 voters said yes to Issue 49 and 2,443 voted no. Ward 12 has 14,022 registered votes, of which 5,520, or 39.3%, chose to cast a vote on Issue 49.

In Ward 13, which includes the Old Brooklyn and part of the Stockyard neighborhood, Issue 49 received 3,694

yes votes and 3,622 no votes. 49.2% of voters in Ward 13 voted on the school levy and bond issue, with 7, 316 of the 14,860 registered voters in Ward 13 weighing in on Issue 49.

In Ward 14, which Clark-Fulton and portions of the Stockyard, Brooklyn Centre, West Boulevard and Tremont neighborhoods, Issue 49 received 2, 165 yes votes and 1,359 no votes. 3,524 of the 12,633 registered voters weighed in on Issue 49, representing 27.8% of those eligible to vote in Ward 14.

Voters in Ward 15, which includes the Detroit Shoreway, Cudell, Edgewater neighborhoods, as well as parts of the Ohio City and Stockyard neighborhoods, had 45.6% of registered voters weigh in on Issue 49, with 7,257 voters out of 15,881 checking yes or no on the issue. In Ward 15 there were 5,170 yes votes and 2,087 no votes.

In Ward 16, which serves the Bellaire Puritas, and West Park neighborhoods, 53.1% of registered voters weighed in on Issue 49, with 6,655 out of 12,522 registered voters casting a vote on the issue. In Ward 16 there were 3,600 yes votes and 3,055 no votes.

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PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Sunday, November 17, 2024; CentroVilla25 (3140 W. 25th St.): The Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development has moved into its new home in the CentroVilla25, a new complex designed to be a center for Hispanic businesses in the Clark Fulton neighborhood. The complex is still awaiting additional tenants.

Voter registration and turnout varies greatly by City Council Ward

by Chuck Hoven

Data from the Cuyahoga County Board of Election’s website shows a smaller percentage of Cuyahoga County’s registered voters chose to vote in 2024 than in the previous two presidential elections in 2020 and 2016. Out of the 894,091 registered voters in Cuyahoga County, there were 587,282 ballots cast in the 2024 General Election which concluded on November 5, 2024. This amounts to a 65.685% voter turnout in Cuyahoga County. This is less than the 71% turnout in 2020 and the 69% turnout in 2016.

Out of the 587,282 ballots cast, 578,368 chose to vote in the presidential race. Candidates Kamala D. Harris and Tim Walz received 376,384 votes, Donald J. Trump and JD Vance received 195,164 votes, and other candidates and write-ins received 6,820 votes.

More voters chose to vote in the

presidential race than any other contest on the ballot. The United States Senate race resulted in 569,482 ballots cast in Cuyahoga County. Democratic candidate Sherrod Brown received 384,042 votes. Republican candidate Bernie Moreno received 170,671. Libertarian candidate Don Kissick received 14,239 votes and there were 530 write-in votes.

In the City Council Wards served by the *Plain Press*, turnout and the number of registered voters varied greatly.

The presidential race offers some insight into the number of registered voters and turnout in different neighborhoods in Cleveland.

In Ward 3 (represented by Councilman Kerry McCormack) there are 20,444 registered voters. Of those, 10,225 chose to cast ballots in the presidential election. The Harris/Walz

continued on page 6

Ward 15 City Council member Spencer will not seek re-election in 2025

by Bruce Checefsky

Cleveland City Council Member Jenny Spencer, who represents Ward

15, which includes Edgewater, Cudell, Detroit Shoreway, and parts of the Ohio City and Stockyard neigh-

borhoods, is not seeking re-election in 2025. She told the Plain Press that she will serve the remainder of her term ending in January 2026.

Spencer replaced Councilman Matt Zone in November 2020 after he resigned to become senior vice president and director of the Thriving Communities Institute at Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Her decision gives potential candidates an advanced opportunity to campaign for the position.

“I came to the decision months ago but waited until after the 2024 elections to break the news,” said Spencer.

She has no plans to appoint her successor and acknowledged that future ward redistricting did not impact her decision not to run.

“The feedback that I got back from the community is that many people do not view appointing a successor as democratic,” she said. “There can and should be steps that council could take to be more democratic, and that is one of them.”

In 2008, Cleveland voters supported a charter amendment that called for the number of wards to be determined by population. The number of wards was reduced from 19 to 17 a decade ago. The Council will reduce the number from 17 to 15 next year. Cleveland’s current population is less than 373,000 as of the 2020 census.

The Triad Research Group hired by City Council will make recommendations for the upcoming redistricting process.

Bob Dykes, a long-time data analyst and statistician, will lead the Triad team. Dr. Mark Salling, a former Cleveland State University Professor of Urban Affairs, and Kent Whitley, an urban planner, political consultant, and organizer, will assist. Spencer moved from Shaker Heights to the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood to work with the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization in 2008. She immediately got involved in community politics and the Obama campaign.

“Community organizing blew my mind,” she said. “It completely changed my mind set about how to create change. There is a way to change the world by building power with others.”

She showed up at community meetings and met a bunch of neighbors who are still her friends today.

“I immediately felt like part of a community. It was magical,” she said, adding she has no regrets about her time at City Council. “I accomplished what I came into council to do. I’m interested in making room for new emerging leaders and supporting people to have leadership positions in the community and grow a new batch of political talent, which is so badly needed.”

Spencer, who holds advanced degrees in political science, public policy, and urban planning, said community organizing is not likely to be easy with President Trump’s return next year and car dealership owner Bernie Merino winning over three-term Senator Sherrod Brown.

“My deep concern, as a private citizen following the completion of my term, is thinking about how we can repair the injustices inherent with our past and address the inequities at a systems level. This is all of our work, not just the work of a few people,” she said. “I think we have not yet begun to understand how difficult organizing will be as we move forward and ask the government to care for all people.”

Spencer acknowledges a period of favorable government support and policies such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) stimulus money supported the City Council agenda, without which success would have been less likely. Cleveland received \$512 million in ARPA funds, the eighth-largest allocation in the United States.

In 2022, Mayor Bibb initiated the Rescue & Transformation Plan in response to the federal money, which included stabilizing the budget, inclusive economic recovery, housing for all, violence prevention and public safety, closing the digital divide, modern and

transparent City Hall, education for everyone, lead-safe Cleveland, arts and neighborhood amenities, and a civic participation fund.

Critics of the plan say that years after City Hall passed a lead-safe law meant to protect young children against the dangers of lead paint exposure, Cleveland has failed to reduce child lead poisoning. Other programs have fledged.

Spencer said the deep-seated council is challenging, and getting people the city services they need is difficult. People have trouble getting basic services through city operations, so they turn to the council offices for help.

“Constituent services are demanding. You could be in reactive mode all the time, responding to whatever is flying at you, and a lot of stuff is always flying at you,” she said. “The Bibb administration made an important change with the new 311 system. Citizens can self-report a problem and get a reference number, freeing up council members to be in less of a reactive mode, making more room for policy work.”

In September, the City of Cleveland announced an online service allowing residents to submit requests related to public works, sanitation, street maintenance, City parks, and more via online forms. After submitting, residents receive a confirmation number to track their requests. If residents create a log-in, they can track the status of the requests through their online account. The online service is available at clevelandohio.gov/311. Residents may still contact the 311 Citizen Support Center by dialing 311 or 216-664-2000.

Spencer remembers taking over the ward during the pandemic. Her first year on the council was almost entirely on Zoom. It was a sharp learning curve. Since then, appreciation of her constituents has grown. She acknowledges that people have lost muscle memory because of the pandemic, and public meetings have diminished.

“Most of the block clubs have disappeared. Neighbors do not know each other as well. Overall, people are more isolated,” she said. “There is no clear way to connect and solve shared problems. Our civic structure is not as strong as before the pandemic.”

As to whether the Browns stadium should stay in Cleveland or move to Brookpark, Spencer is not a passionate sports fan and was never enamored with a stadium on the lake that has eight games a year. Still, she supports efforts to solve the problem.

“I believe our existing stadium is perfectly good and capable of a reasonable renovation,” she said.

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A look at some of the buildings in Old Brooklyn's Historic District

by Lynette Filips

This month we continue to look at the history of the northwest corner of Pearl Rd. and Memphis Ave. which the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC) is seeking to "revitalize" with a \$31 million new construction project. It is the most historic section of Cleveland's Old Brooklyn neighborhood and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2005. A picture of St. Luke's United Church of Christ, one of the numerous commercial and institutional buildings on Pearl Rd., Broadview Rd. and Memphis Ave. included in the Historic District designation, accompanies the online listing of the South Brooklyn Commercial District.

While OBCDC pursues funding for a plan to tear down the major portion of the corner to erect a five-story (formerly four) building with commercial space on the first floor, residential space on the upper floors, and a brewery or restaurant in the church proper portion of the former St. Luke's, another group of people in the Old Brooklyn neighborhood is still hoping to Save Our Historic District.

This twelfth in a series of articles will shed additional light on the history of downtown Old Brooklyn in the hope that someone in authority will realize that adaptive reuse of the existing buildings is superior to tearing down most of them and replacing the demo-ed area with new construction.

Adaptive reuse would accomplish the same goals of adding new residential space, updated commercial space and new socialization space to downtown Old Brooklyn, but it would do so by using the existing historic structures. It is the method which has been employed in downtown Cleveland to put new residential, hotel, retail and restaurant space in buildings which formerly housed department stores, banks and other businesses.

This month I will continue discussing Old Brooklyn's designation

on the National Register of Historic Places by starting to individually explore the 30 buildings within the confines of the South Brooklyn Commercial District.

Beginning on the west side of Pearl Rd., south of the road down to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, south of a park dedicated to two teachers who were murdered in Parma approximately 100 years ago, south of 2 small modern commercial buildings, south of Henninger Rd. and south of a former gas station, we come to the first "contributing" building in the historic district —

A large 3-story red brick building which was constructed in 1895 with a Queen Anne style design and storefronts located at 4146 - 4138 Pearl Rd. (south to the corner of Krather Rd.), it is called the Krather Building or the Krather Block. It is named after the real estate developer from Parma who had it constructed — Henry Krather.

Perhaps the Krather Building's most famous tenant was the former Henninger & Decker Hardware Store at the Krather Rd. end of the building. Shortly after the building's completion, William Henninger and August Decker partnered to open the store which endured (under changed ownership) for 50 — 60 years.

(William Henninger was a descendant of Phillip Henninger who built the stone house at Broadview Rd. and Old Rockside Rd., regarded to be the oldest house in Parma.)

In addition to the usual sales of nuts, bolts and screws, furnace sales and repair, sheet metal work, tinsmith work and gutters, Henninger & Decker employees also handled some of the heating needs of the greenhouses on and around Schaaf Rd.

Originally there was a dance hall on the third floor of the Krather Building and my understanding is that apartments were on the second floor. In later years a gym, rather than the dance hall, was on the third floor. A 2-story brick addition



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF OLD BROOKLYN
The H. Krather Building, built in 1895, is one of several historic buildings in the South Brooklyn Historic Commercial District, near the corner of Pearl and Memphis.

was added to the Krather Building in 1911.


Travelrama Travel Agency was another long-term business in the Krather Building. It was located at 4138 Pearl Rd at the north end of the building. It wasn't an original business but was it still there into the early 1980s, at least. Edith Rosch, one of Henry Krather's descendants, owned the travel business (as well as the building at the time the application for the area to become an Historic District was submitted.)

Until approximately 10 years ago, the Krather Building was under-used and under- appreciated. It was for sale for what seemed like a very long time. Then someone with an interest in rehabbing purchased it. Now Horizon School & Day Care — Old Brooklyn Center, 4142 Pearl Rd., is the building's major tenant.


The Krather Building's little storefront at 4138 Pearl Rd. has also had two new tenants since the rehab — first, Old Brooklyn Cheese Company and currently, Old Brooklyn Nutrition. The latter sells things like juices, smoothies, teas, protein bars and açai bowls.

Across Krather Rd. from the Krather Building is the second "contributing" building to the historic district — the Institute of Divine Metaphysical Research at 4150

Pearl Rd. I do not know what the two-story brick building was meant to be when it was constructed in 1922, but the 2005 application for continued on page 7



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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: A participant in the annual Day of the Dead Parade bangs on a large drum.

City Council must speed up ward redistricting to meet new deadline

by Chuck Hoven
A November 22nd article in *The Plain Dealer* by Kaitlin Durbin and Courtney Astolfi titled “Surprise state election has council in a holiday rush”, says that City Council will have to reduce the number of Council Wards to 15 and draw new ward boundaries by January 6th.
NEWS ANALYSIS
The City Charter sets the deadline for April 1, 2025, so the wards could be in place for June 11th filing date for the September 2025 City Council Primary elections. However, the State of Ohio decided to have a statewide election in May to ask voters to extend the State’s capital improvement program. *The Plain Dealer* article says rules governing the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections require periods of time before and after the May election when it must lock down its voter files. Because of these requirements, the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections says it would be impossible to have time to allocate Cleveland voters to their new wards and precincts in time for the June 11 filling date for City Council candidates – a process it says will take about six weeks. Hence City Council will have to speed up the process of drawing new ward boundaries and have them to the Board of Elections by early January.
In October of this year, consultants hired by Cleveland City Council held three public meetings to gather citizen input on the redistricting of Cleveland

City Council Wards. The City of Cleveland Charter calls for the use of the United States Census data on the City of Cleveland to determine the size of City Council.
A statement from Cleveland City Council in October explained how the City Charter determines how many members City Council is allowed to have. The Cleveland City Charter calls for the City Council to lose two City Council seats every time the population drops by to a certain threshold. The current seventeen-member City Council is based on the City’s population as measured by the 2010 Census. In 2010 the Census said Cleveland’s population was 396,810 people. According to the City Charter, if the City’s population was 425, 000 or less but more than 375,000, the size of City Council would be seventeen members.
The 2020 Census measured Cleveland’s population at 372,624. The Charter requires that if the City of Cleveland’s population is 375,000 or less, but more than 325,000 the number of City Council Wards should be fifteen. The Charter calls for reducing the number of Council members so each Council member would represent roughly 25,000 people.
The statement from City Council says, “Cleveland has a population of 372,624 people, compared to 396,815 people in the 2010 US Census – a 6.10% decline over ten years. Having

just fallen under the 375,000-population threshold, per US Census reports, the City Charter mandates that the Council be comprised of 15 members – two less than the current member count of 17.”
The consultants Cleveland City Council hired to help with the redistricting process are Bob Dykes of the Triad Research Group; Mark Salling, a prominent demographer who for years headed up Northern Ohio Data Information Services (NODIS) at Cleveland State University’s College of Urban Affairs; and Kent Whitley, an urban planner, political consultant, and community organizer.
According to the statement from Cleveland City Council, the October meetings were designed “to share redistricting goals, collect community feedback, and ask residents to share their maps.” The City Council statement said, “It is believed this is the first Cleveland City Council to seek public feedback on the reapportionment process.”
City Council promised additional meetings to review the maps. Due to the change in the deadline for drawing new wards, public input will have to be compressed into a shorter timeline. In the November 22 *Plain Dealer* article, Cleveland City Council President Blaine Griffin vowed that Cleveland residents would still have an opportunity to see the maps before City Council votes on them at its January 6th meeting.

VOTER REGISTRATION AND TURNOUT

continued from page 4

ticket received 7,744 of those votes; the Trump/Vance ticket received 2,315 votes; and the remainder of the votes went to other candidates. Ward 3 serves Ohio City, most of the Downtown and Tremont neighborhoods and part of the Stockyard neighborhood.
In Ward 11 (represented by Councilman Danny Kelly) there are 12,386 registered voters. Of those, 6,292 chose

to cast a ballot in the presidential election. Harris/Walz received 4,235 votes; Trump/Vance received 1960 votes. The remainder of the votes went to other candidates. Ward 11 serves parts of the Edgewater, Cudell, West Boulevard, Jefferson and Bellaire-Puritas neighborhoods.
In Ward 12 (represented by Councilwoman Rebecca Maurer) there are 14,022 registered voters. Of those,

6,409 chose to vote in the presidential election. 4,100 voted for the Harris/Walz ticket and 2,216 voted for the Trump/Vance ticket. The remainder voted for other presidential candidates. Ward 12 serves parts of Brooklyn Centre, Old Brooklyn, Tremont, and Slavic Village neighborhoods.
In Ward 13 (represented by Councilman Kris Harsh) there are 14,860 registered voters. Of those, 6,409 chose to vote in the presidential election. The Harris/Walz ticket received 4,100 of those votes and the Trump/Vance ticket receive 2,216 of those votes. The remaining votes went to other candidates.

Ward 13 serves the Old Brooklyn and part of the Stockyard neighborhood.
In Ward 14 (represented by Councilwoman Jasmin Santana) there are 12,633 registered voters. Of those, 4,324 chose to vote in the presidential election. The Harris/Walz ticket received 2,775 votes; the Trump/Vance ticket received 1,487 votes. The remainder of the votes went to other candidates. Ward 14 serves the Clark-Fulton and portions of the Stockyard, Brooklyn Centre, West Boulevard, and Tremont neighborhoods.
In Ward 15 (represented by Councilwoman Jenny Spencer) there are 15,881 registered voters. Of those,

8,394 chose to vote in the presidential election. 6,658 Ward 15 voters voted for the Harris/Walz ticket and 1,813 voted for the Trump/Vance ticket. The remainder voted for other candidates. Ward 15 serves the Detroit Shoreway, Cudell, Edgewater neighborhoods and part of the Ohio City and Stockyard neighborhoods.
In Ward 16 (represented by Councilman Brian Kazy) has 12,522 registered voters. Of those, 7, 595 chose to vote in the presidential election. The Harris/Walz ticket received 4,695 votes; the Trump Vance ticket received 2,812 votes. The remainder of the votes went to other presidential candidates. Ward 16 serves the West Park and Bellaire Puritas neighborhoods.

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The guide offers free listings of names and phone numbers – additional information can be placed in the guide by purchasing a square in the guide. For more information contact Ed Tishel at plainpressads@yahoo.com

Community Guide

Plain Press Community Guide

Be There! Buy a Square!

Free legal advice available for domestic violence survivors involved in a custody battle

by **Tonya Sams**

Family turmoil can be difficult to manage, and a custody battle can add even more strain. If your case goes before the court, it's important to understand what to expect.

The most common custody cases involve both parents, and the court's primary goal is to create a parenting plan focused on the child's best interests. Generally, there are two types of plans: residential parenting and shared parenting.

Several roles or responsibilities may be assigned by the court (or agreed upon by both parents). For instance, the designation of "residential parent" can sometimes be limited to decisions like choosing the child's school district. In other cases, it may include broader rights, such as making choices about healthcare and extracurricular activities.

"Something less than a 50/50 split is considered shared parenting time, and that's more typical," explains Andrea

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OLD BROOKLYN HISTORIC DISTRICT

continued from page 5

the historic district says that Cleveland Bible Research, Inc. owns the building. I do know that it was a rough bar, the Heidelberg Lounge, in the 1970s.

The United States Postal Service's Pearlbrook Station is the third "contributing" building in the historic district. Located at 4160 Pearl Rd, it is a 2-story brick and stone structure which was built in 1935. The style is Art Deco and a WPA mural inside called "Ore Docks and Steel Mills" was painted by Richard Zoellner.

The fourth building within the historic district, Irie Jamaican Restaurant, 4162 Pearl Rd., is a "non-contributing" structure. Nonetheless, it has an interesting history. The 1-story brick-facade-on concrete-block building is owned by Royal Castle and was originally a Royal Castle "Fit for a King" burger joint. It was probably quite a popular place when the Broadvue Theatre was next door. The building had been vacant for quite a while when Irie moved in, but before that another popular carry-out food spot, China Wok, was in the space.

The fifth building in the historic district lineup is also "non-contributing" — the Family Dollar store at 4170 Pearl Rd. (at the corner of "Short" Broadview Rd.) It was erected in the mid-1990s after the mid-1920s Broadvue Theatre complex was torn down. The Broadvue was a massive structure which was faced with glazed terra cotta tiles. Family Dollar is a 1-story block building with a parking lot in front of it. It was not what the community expected

COMMUNITY BOARD

continued from page 2

on Board program. Call 216-658-1355 for more information and to sign up.

THE OHIO CITY AND TREMONT BETTER STREETS COMMITTEES, resident-led groups that promote biking, walking, and safe streets in their neighborhoods, meet on the second Tuesday of every month at the Bike Cleveland office (3000 Bridge Ave, Suite #1). This month's meeting will be on Tuesday, December 10. Learn more at bikecleveland.org/.../better-streets-committees. Questions? Reach out to Jenna at jenna@bikecleveland.org.

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: Festival participants show off their skeleton-themed costumes. The Day of the Dead is a traditional holiday celebrated in Mexico and some other Latin American countries that is focused on remembering and honoring one's deceased relatives.

and intends to convert it into apartments.

At the time the application for historic district status was submitted in 2005, a company called Wireless City was in the former Marshall Drug building. Today the electronics company there is called Metro by T-Mobile.

There are still 24 structures to discuss in the South Brooklyn Commercial District and so next month I will continue to "head south" on Pearl Rd. The previous articles in this series can be read online at www.plainpress.blog and via hard copies at the Historical Society of Old Brooklyn Museum, 3430 Memphis Ave. It is usually open on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from noon

to 5 p.m., but call (216)337-8200 to be sure before stopping by.

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The *Plain Press*'ability to continue to serve the west side neighborhoods of Cleveland is due in large part to the contributions of readers and supporters in the annual Friends of the Plain Press Campaign. The Friends of the Plain Press Campaign was established following the successful 2011 40th anniversary fundraiser. The *Plain Press* reached out to readers and supporters, and you came through to help sustain the newspaper.

This year, we are again asking you to donate to the *Plain Press* to ensure the newspaper moves forward. To mark its 53rd anniversary we are asking you for a donation of \$53 or a reflection of its 53 years of operation (e.g. \$106, \$153, \$530). Your donation will help subsidize the newspaper. The donations will be specifically used to support the *Plain Press*' Community Board's listings of free events and resources.

A separate *Plain Press* fund has been established for the newspaper by Organize! Ohio (a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization). Checks should be made out to **Organize Ohio and sent to 11811 Shaker Blvd, Suite 109, Cleveland, Ohio 44120**. Your contribution is tax deductible. To make online donations you can link to the Organize! Ohio Pay Pal through the *Plain Press* website: <https://plainpress.blog>.

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, November 2, 2024; Day of the Dead Festival, Cleveland Public Theatre: A performer in a mariachi band entertains the crowd with his violin.

CUSTODY

continued from page 7

Gonzalez-Burton, Senior Attorney in the Family Law Practice Group at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

The court determines the appropriate custody plan by considering multiple factors beyond Ohio law alone. Input from child advocates, mental health professionals, psychologists, and parents is carefully weighed. Often, a thorough review of the family’s background is essential to ensure the child’s safety and well-being.

In some cases, a child may be appointed a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or an attorney called a guardian ad litem. Both roles serve the child’s best interests, and sometimes

an additional guardian ad litem is appointed to represent the child’s personal wishes.

“Occasionally, a child’s desires may differ from what’s in their best interest,” Andrea said. “In unique cases, especially with older teens, the child might become a party to the case so that their wishes can be considered, though this is rare. Ultimately, it is up to the judge to decide what parenting time will look like.”

Even in cases involving domestic violence, the court generally believes a child should still have the opportunity to build a healthy relationship with both parents. To prevent any risk to the child, structured guidelines are put in place during visitations or custody exchanges. For example, drop-offs might

be arranged in public places, at a police or fire station, or via school transfers, where each parent takes turns picking up or dropping off at the school.

Andrea emphasizes that custody cases are not about “winning” or “losing” in the traditional sense.

“Winning means being able to see your child in a therapeutically appropriate setting with safe, healthy behaviors. That’s the only standard of winning that we recognize.”

Are you a victim of domestic violence and involved in a custody case? Legal Aid may be able to help! To apply for assistance, call 888-817-3777, or complete an online intake 24/7 at lascleve.org.

Tonya Sams is a Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

TOUGH WORK AHEAD
continued from page one

severely impact the school district’s budget.

Stockdale explained that when the State of Ohio figures school district’s share of the State Calculated Base Cost of education a child, it looks at the valuation of property in the school district. Based on the value of properties in Cleveland, Stockdale said, “Cleveland is looking like a wealthier city.”

“Cleveland according to the data that they (State of Ohio) look at is looking like a wealthier District with the property valuations, which of course we know, we don’t receive additional funds for and income from. So that is a challenge for us. The takeaway from this is that there is a shift with the state funding formula with the cost of education from the state to local taxpayers,” said Stockdale.

Stockdale explained, “The expectation is we will be spending 21% more out of local tax dollars” as CMSD’s share of the calculated base cost of education. He said in the current school year the base cost of education calculated by the State of Ohio is \$8,094. The State’s share of that amount is \$5,270 per child. CMSD’s share is \$2,824. In the 2028-2029 school year the State of Ohio projects the base cost of education to increase to \$8,763 per student. The State’s share would be \$5,356, and the local share would increase to \$3,407.

What Stockdale referred to but didn’t spell out why the CMSD doesn’t receive revenue that would be expected from the wealth of property in Cleveland. A March 11, 2024 article by Nick Castele in *Signal Cleveland* does spell it out. The article titled “Cash strapped Cleveland schools lose out on millions from tax abatements.” The article says, “The Cleveland Metropolitan School District misses out on an average of almost \$29 million in revenue each year, thanks to tax breaks meant to spur new housing and businesses in the city.” The article

notes this figure does not include tax exemptions by nonprofit institutions such as the large hospitals and the property tax exemptions granted to the stadiums.

Disadvantaged Student Fund

Another area where policy at the State level will impact the Cleveland Metropolitan School District Budget is in revenue it receives from the Disadvantaged Student Fund. “Due to change in calculation methodology, Cleveland will receive \$10.5 million less this year, than was projected in 2023 and the gap will continue to widen,” said Stockdale.

Stockdale said while the state has increased the amount of funding statewide that goes into the Disadvantaged Student Fund, due to a new way of calculating eligibility, more students statewide will be eligible for funds. The funding is calculated based on students being eligible for a free lunch.

Recent changes in the school lunch program eligibility criterion mean more students are included. Previously a school system had to have a 60% poverty rate for all students in the school to be eligible for a free lunch. That changed to school systems needing only a 30% poverty rate among their students to have all students be eligible for a free lunch. Stockdale says this has resulted in “funding shifting from high-high poverty districts to middle income districts.”

Levy impact

Stockdale then proceeded to explain the impact of the recently passed levy on projected deficits and fund balances.

He said, CMSD would only be due \$49 million a year from the \$52 million levy. This is because per agreements in the Cleveland Plan \$3 million a year would go to partner charter schools.

Stockdale noted that in this year’s budget, CMSD would only receive a half year of revenue from the new levy. Stockdale said current general fund expenses of the district are about \$733.3 million. Continuing revenue that CMSD had before the levy amounts to \$710.8 million. This school year’s income from the new levy is expected to be about \$24.1 this school year. This brings this year’s revenue to \$734.9 million. Thus, CMSD projects a surplus of \$1.6 million for this school year.

Stockdale explained that CMSD began this fiscal year with a positive cash balance of \$140.8 million. With the projected \$1.6 million surplus, the district will end the year with a cash balance of \$142.4 million. However, encumbrances (bills owed) will bring the unencumbered year end cash balance to \$117.4 million.

Stockdale explained that employee wages make up 53% of the CMSD annual budget and employee benefits constitute another 22%. He said the increases in wages in the current bargaining unit agreement call for a 4% increase this school year, a 2% increase in the 2025-2026 school year, and a 3% increase in the 2026-27 school year.

Under current projections of rising costs and declining revenue from the State of Ohio, Stockdale said CMSD projects that if nothing changes it will have a deficit of \$39.7 million in the 2025-26 school year and a deficit of \$77.6 million in the 2026-27 school year.

Stockdale noted that another five-year budget projection will be readied by CMSD in May of next year. He noted the next two-year State of Ohio Budget as well as actions by the Cleveland Board of Education would likely result in changes in CMSD budget projections.

Christmas Mass Schedule

St. Malachi
2459 Washington Ave
Dec. 24 -4:00pm
Dec. 25 -10:00am

St Patrick
3602 Bridge Ave.
Dec. 24 -4:30pm and 9:30pm
Dec. 25 -10:00am

Come, Join Us!

HISTORIC ST. ROCCO CHURCH

3205 Fulton Road, Cleveland OH 44109 • Ph: 216-961-8331

Come worship with us!

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve, December 24 th	4:00pm Vigil Mass (with visit from Santa) 10:00pm Mass at Night *Both the 4pm & 10pm with candle light
Christmas Day, December 25 th	9:30am and 12:00 noon
New Year’s Eve, December 31 st	6:30pm with Te Deum
New Year’s Day, January 1 st	9:30am and 12:00 noon

CONFESSIONS

Monday, December 23rd 6pm – 7pm (in Chapel)
Tuesday, December 24th 3pm – 4pm (in Church)
*Every Monday thru Friday, 6pm - 6:20pm (in Chapel)
*Every Saturday 3:30pm - 4:30pm (in Church)
*Every Sunday 9:15am – 10:15am / 11:30am – 12:30pm (in Church)

Saint Ignatius Of Antioch Church

10205 Lorain Avenue (at West Boulevard)
216-251-0300 • SIOAPARISH.ORG
Rev. Kevin Estabrook - Pastor

Advent

Advent Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration - Friday, Dec 6 - 7pm
Advent Taize Prayer Service - Thursday, Dec 12 - 7pm
Immaculate Conception Masses - Monday, Dec 9 - 9am (school mass), 5:30pm
Advent Lessons & Carols - Sunday, Dec 15 - 7pm

Christmas

Christmas Eve Masses - Dec 24 - 5pm, 12am Midnight
Christmas Day Mass - Dec 25 - 11am
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God - January 1 - 11am

Regardless of your denomination or religious affiliation, you are invited to our prayer services and liturgies.

May Christ the Lord bless your family with His holy peace this Christmas

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCHES
WELCOME YOU!

St. Paul's Community United Church of Christ

4427 Franklin Blvd. 216-651-6250

Christmas Service:
Christmas Eve at 7 p.m.
Worship Service
Sundays at 10:30am
Food Pantry
Tues, Weds, Thurs. from 9am until 2pm
Thrift Store
Wednesdays 1pm to 3pm
1st Saturday of the Month
10am to 12pm Clothes \$1 a bag

IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2928 Scranton Rd. • 216-781-9511

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:
German service..... 3:00 pm
English service..... 7:00 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICES:
English service..... 10:00 am
Serving God's People Since 1880

REV. JERRY WITT-JABLONSKI, PASTOR
REV. HORST HOYER, PASTOR EMERITUS

ST. AUGUSTINE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

CHURCH SCHEDULE

MASS	CONFESSIONS
Saturday Vigil: 4:15 PM (Interpreted for the Deaf)	Saturday: 3:30 – 4:00 PM
Sunday: 8:30 AM (Interpreted for the Deaf) 11:00 AM (Fully Signed for the Deaf)	

Loving God, for all who feel on the margins, but who are at the center of your heart, we ask you to open our hearts. Help us to become a church and a nation where
**ALL LIVES HAVE DIGNITY, ALL PEOPLE ARE LOVED
AND ALL ARE WELCOME.**

**ST. AUGUSTINE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**
staugustinecleveland.org
2486 W. 14th Street, Cleveland, OH 44113 • (216)-781-5530

ST. JOHN CANTIUS CHURCH

906 College Avenue
216-781-9095

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve
Sunday, December 24th
4:00 PM (Vigil)
10:00 PM

Christmas Day
Monday, December 25th
8:30 AM (Polish)
11:30 AM (English)