



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG
Saturday, April 25, 2026; The Madison Avenue Community Garden at Story, 9900 Madison Avenue: Garden Leader and W. 98th Street resident Diab Dar-Issa greets volunteers coming to help create raised garden beds.

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Plain Press

Cleveland's Westside Newspaper

Federal Consent Decree Monitoring Team reports to Safety Committee

by Chuck Hoven

On February 19th, 2026, Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb's Administration joined with U.S. President Donald Trump Administration's Department of Justice (DOJ) to file a motion to end the Consent Decree that the Cleveland Division of Police has been under ever since 2015 during U.S. President Barack Obama's Administration's Department of Justice.

On May 8th, United States District

Court Judge Solomon Oliver, who oversees the case, denied the request and said the City of Cleveland has a ways to go to meet the goals outlined in the agreement formed to achieve compliance with the Consent Decree.

On May 13, testimony by the Consent Decree Monitoring Team before Cleveland City Council's Safety Committee demonstrated the significant amount of reform still

needed for the City of Cleveland Division of Police to be in substantial and effective compliance with the Consent Decree agreed to by the City of Cleveland and the United States Department of Justice in 2015.

According to the City of Cleveland's website, the Consent Decree resulted after a 21-month investigation determined there was reasonable cause to believe the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) engaged in excessive use of force. The statement on the website says, "the Department of Justice concluded that the alleged pattern and practice of excessive force was related to structural and operational issues within the Division and potentially violated the United States Constitution and federal law."

During the 21-month investigation by the Barack Obama Administration's Department of Justice, many Cleveland residents testified to the pattern and practice of use of excessive force by Cleveland police officers. The testimony included residents concerned about 137 shots Cleveland police officers fired at Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams on November 29th, 2012, that resulted in the death of the two homeless Clevelanders. Sixty Cleveland Police officers were involved in that 23-mile chase continued on page 4



SCREEN SHOT

May 13, 2026; Cleveland City Council Safety Committee, Cleveland City Hall, E. 6th and Lakeside Avenue: Charles See, a member of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team, prepares to testify about increasing engagement and building trust with the community.



PHOTO BY COREY MEADOR

St. John's Episcopal Church, 2600 Church Avenue: Renovations are underway inside the sanctuary.

Final report offers no clarity on Cleveland's Transformative Arts Fund spending and impact

by Bruce Checefsky

The City of Cleveland spent \$3 million of one-time ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act COVID relief) money on a project called the Transformative Arts Fund (TAF). Through this project, the City promised to transform underserved neighborhoods through arts projects. But the City is leaving the public in the dark about how and where the money was spent. Critics of the program found the projects hard to access, and no one seems to know what, if anything, the projects left behind.

Midway through her hour-long final report to the Health, Human Services, and Arts Committee (HHS&A) meeting at City Hall on April 27, Rhonda Brown, Cleveland's senior strategist for arts, culture, and the creative economy, said, "The institutional partner retains all financial records and receipts." She then repeated the statement, adding, "They are contractually accountable for spending the funds."

Brown was responding to multiple requests made by local news agencies and individuals for public

records requests surrounding the Transformative Arts Fund project. The response has been slow, if not stagnant.

While the City of Cleveland, along with Assembly and LAND studio, managed the program, the "institutional partners" were various community organizations and institutions, each assigned to support a specific artist-led project.

CoolCleveland made a public records request as early as November 2025 and got no response. Requests were made again in April and March, which included asking for a list of the 400 artists the City claims benefited from the program. The location and dates of the performances and public installations for the 600 new artworks they say were created during the year-long program have yet to be verified. City spokesperson Tyler Sinclair eventually released over 200 pages of contracts and spreadsheets but failed to release the full request.

Axios Cleveland encountered a similar issue when attempting to report on the grants shortly after they were announced in 2024. Ap- continued on page 6

Episcopal Diocese seeks community input on future of St. John's Church

by Corey Meador

A \$400,000 project underway at St. John's Episcopal Church sparks new life and opportunity into Cuyahoga county's oldest consecrated building. On Church Avenue in the Hingetown neighborhood of Cleveland, many pass St. John's Church without realizing its significance. St. John's, completed around 1836, is a national historical landmark because of its role in the underground railroad. It is the third oldest building in Cleveland, behind

Dunham Tavern and a private residence in Old Brooklyn.

The floor, seen to be sagging some 75 years ago in the middle of the 3,500-4,000 sq foot space, is finally being replaced. Cleveland Public Theater organizers of the annual Station Hope event, held in the church, pointed out the bowing floor beneath the pews, concerned about its stability. This prompted the Board of the Episcopal Diocese, who own and operate the church, to obtain an inspection which judged

the floor unsafe for more than 10 people. The repair was made a priority and is propelling plans to re-envision the role of the church in the community. Rebecca Miller, the Episcopal Diocese Commissioner for Operations said, "Station Hope is really important to continue. And the fact that it was not able to happen last year really was disappointing for all of us. We're working hard to make sure that that can happen in the future and that it doesn't get lost. continued on page 6



PHOTO BY ANASTASIA PANTSIOS

September 6, 2025; The Art Garden Project, W.50th and Storer Avenue: Cleveland-based Dominican artist Ariel Verges (also known as BlackBrain), paints a mural. The Art Garden Project is a large-scale community initiative, on Storer Avenue and nearby neighborhoods, catalyzed and funded by the city's Transformative Arts Fund (TAF).

ADVOCACY

DISABILITY ACCESS DAY: Visit the West Side Market (1979 W. 25 St.) on Wednesday, June 10, from 10 am - 2 pm to celebrate accessibility. The event will include 30 minutes of shopping support, sighted human guides, and American Sign Language interpreters. A calm space for people who may feel overwhelmed at events and accessible restrooms will also be available. Accessible parking is available behind the market, with entrances on Bridge Ave. and Lorain Ave. The first 90 minutes are free.

RAPE CRISIS CENTER'S AMBASSADOR TRAINING: Cleveland Rape Crisis Center's FREE two-part Ambassador Training Workshops are your chance to learn how to support survivors and create positive social change in our communities. We will offer workshops every month this year, both virtually and in person at our Clark-Fulton office. This month's trainings will be in person. Part 1: Tuesday, June 9. Part 2: Tuesday, June 16. 5:30 pm-7 pm both days. The workshops are open to anyone who wants to learn more about how to support survivors

of rape and sexual abuse, and get involved in creating social change. Deaf Community welcome! Ambassador Trainings will include live American Sign Language interpretation upon request. Pre-registration required. Register now at clevelandrapecrisis.org/ambassador. Questions? Please contact educationoutreach@clevelandrcc.org.

ARTS

CUYAHOGA ARTS AND CULTURE GRANTS: Cuyahoga Arts and Culture invites nonprofit organizations producing, presenting, or creating arts and cultural programs in Cuyahoga County to apply for funding in 2027. Visit cacgrants.org/apply to start your application today. Need help? Contact us at info@cacgrants.org or 216-515-8303. You can also visit cacgrants.org/grants/events-deadlines for a list of upcoming virtual workshops and office hours designed to help you through the process. The deadline to apply is June 25 at 4:30 pm. **"WOMEN WHO ROCK" BOOK CLUB:** Join us for an engaging book discussion about "Women Who Rock" – literally and figuratively – each month on select Satur-



days, 10:30 am - 11:30 am, at the Eastman Branch of the Cleveland Public Library (11602 Lorain Ave). Each month's book selection will focus on a different female music legend. We will discuss the book while listening to their music as well. This month, we will discuss Bessie Smith: A Poet's Biography of a Blues Legend by Jackie Kay on June 20. Please call our branch at 216-623-6955 if you like us to put a copy of the book on hold for you.

STREET STUDIO: This month's Street Studio will be Saturday, June 27 from 1 pm to 3 pm at St. Paul's Community Church, 4427 Franklin Ave. All are welcome to share music, poetry, spoken word or to listen in support. Piano, drums, guitar, and microphones provided – as well as coffee and snacks. For more information contact Ian Heisey at heisey2140@sbcglobal.net or Trennell Garrison at sapphire1497@yahoo.com.

COMMUNITY

FREE WINDOW SCREEN REPAIR by the Open Windows Ministry of the Nehemiah Mission of Cleveland (6515 Bridge Ave). We will replace the screen material in aluminum/wood window screen frames or doors. Call

216-961-6968 ex 12 and leave a message to arrange a drop off time. We will contact you for pick up upon completion. **DONATIONS APPRECIATED.** All money raised goes to support this ministry and The Nehemiah Mission of Cleveland. Note, we cannot repair bent or broken frames but will do our best to replace the screen materials. Learn more at nehemiahmission.org.

EDUCATION

SIDE-BY-SIDE: Join the Cleveland Teachers Union and the Cleveland Public Library for a free parent-teacher workshop on Saturday, June 6, from 10:15 am to 1 pm, at the Jefferson Branch (850 Jefferson Ave). Come and join us for an engaging day of learning to assist your student with literacy. The event will include free food, free books, and free activities for the children. For families with students in kindergarten thru fifth grade. Register at cpl.org/side-by-side.

ENVIRONMENT

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP: Learn how to collect rainwater for outdoor use and help stop stormwater pollution in your community by making a rain barrel on Saturday, June 6 from 11 am to noon at the Eastman Branch of

the Cleveland Public Library (11602 Lorain Ave). Rain barrels are \$60, but the workshop is free to attend. You are NOT required to purchase a barrel.

WARD 14 DUMPSTER DAYS: In an effort to keep our neighborhoods clean, Dumpsters will be placed in Ward 14 neighborhoods for residents to discard trash from their yards, garages, and streets on select days. (Dumpsters are for residents only. No commercial debris please!) The Dumpsters will be available at International Village (3116 W. 48 St.) on June 13 and August 8, in Clark Fulton/Tremont (W. 30 St./Meyer Ave.) on June 27 and August 22, in Brooklyn Center (4322 Denison Ave.) on July 11 and September 5, and in Stockyard (3358 W. 46 St.) on July 25 and September 19. All Dumpsters will be available from 8 am-2:30 pm.

EVENTS

THE BIG READ BLOCK PARTY: In celebration of the novel The House on Mango Street, the Julia De Burgos Cultural Arts Center is hosting a Big Read Block Party. We were awarded the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant to focus programming on this book and to build community over reading and experiences. Enjoy dance performances, music, sweet treats, and an indoor exhibition in our painted house. Friday, June 26 from 6 pm to 8 pm at 2800 Archwood Ave.

FAMILY FUN FEST: Join us at the Eastman Branch of the Cleveland Public Library (11602 Lorain Ave.) for a day of family-friendly fun and activities. Gaga for Goats, therapy reading dogs, ice cream, games, crafts, and more! And while you're here, sign up for our summer reading program, too!

FATHERHOOD CONFERENCE: Save the date for the 20th Annual Fatherhood

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, April 25, 2026; The Madison Avenue Community Garden at Story, 9900 Madison Avenue: Tom Masaveg, a volunteer from Cudell Arts, helps in raising the beds at the community garden.

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Open letter from Plain Press Editor Debbie Sadlon

Dear Readers,
I am the Editor of the Plain Press and have been for probably the last 30 years. This might be a good time in the history of the Plain Press, to explain the Plain Press Editorial Policy to the community. According to our By-Laws, the Editorial position of the news paper requires approval from the Plain Press Board of Trustees. For this reason, the Plain Press cannot publish a commentary written by me, the Editor, since it may be construed as the newspaper's Editorial position. This policy was written with the effort to put a check on the Editorial bias of the newspaper. As the Editor, this basically puts me in the position of a ghost writer whose personal bias is hopefully stifled. As you

might imagine, this can be a tough job —especially for an opinionated person like me. Any feedback coming from me should be limited to corrections, or retractions, for any mistakes in spelling, grammar or inaccurate facts. For this reason, you may not get a response to your letters to the Editor, if your letter does not directly address one of these issues. The Letters to the Editor page of the Plain Press is an open forum where your unedited opinions can be shared with your neighbors, public servants and elected officials. **Debbie Sadlon**
Editor of the Plain Press



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, April 25, 2026; The Madison Avenue Community Garden at Story, 9900 Madison Avenue: Community Garden volunteers work together to prepare garden beds.

Democratic Party Central Committee member reacts to Plain Press primary election coverage

To the editor:
I am writing in response to Bruce Checefsky's article published in the May 2026 Plain Press titled "Pre-Primary Endorsements Unfairly Influence Election Results".
LETTER
I have lived in the City of Cleveland for the past 24 years minus a brief stint in Denver. During this time, I have served on the steering committee of the Cuyahoga County Women's Democratic Caucus, the

Central and Executive Committee of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party, and I am a 3-time delegate to the Democratic Party National Convention for President Barack Obama (2012), Sec. Hillary Clinton (2016), and President Joseph Biden (2020). I will note that in 2020 my first caucus vote was for Sen. Kamala Harris, then Sen. Elizabeth Warren, followed by then Vice-President Biden. But my most meaningful endeavor was forming "Democrats for Principled Leadership" in 2009 with my longtime

friend Jan Roller and Lakewood City Councilman Tom Bullock. We did this as a result of the Democratic Party's leadership of Jimmy Dimora. We did this in a time that change was not happening at a rate that elicited the results we wanted. We knew the change needed to occur at the precinct level and we needed to

activate the Central Committee in the way it was designed to operate. This was a countywide political effort that eventually resulted in the Party leadership change to Chairman Stuart Garson in 2010. It was seen as a new day for our Party and in hindsight, it was. Since that day, the Democratic Party has operated in a very transparent manner. In conjunction with the new county government, the Democratic Party has not experienced the same control of any one person that our Party once did.

the journalistic courtesy as a quote.

Second, to address the content of this article, I can personally attest that the internal dynamics of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party have not been stronger. The Cuyahoga County Democratic Party has not seen a better leader than David Brock in my 20+ years in Cleveland. As a Central Committee representative, I did not even support David when he was up for election as Chairperson. Despite my personal opposition on the first vote, David prevailed and we as a Party are all better for it. My testament is that there is room within our Party for opposition, but slander, mud-slinging, and sour grapes from those who do not get their way are not a part of it. Our Party is fair, distinguished, and operating with high standards. Voters should have faith, and we hope that in the future, publications will take the time to vet and fairly report on what they are covering.

Angela Shuckahosee
Cleveland, Ohio

Resident concerned about condition of Fire Station Number 23

Open Letter to Cleveland City Council
Dear Council Members,
As a resident of the Cudell/Clifton-Baltic/Edgewater neighborhood, I was highly disappointed to learn that the 'Municipal Services & Properties Committee' blocked the ability for Mayor Bibb's office to enforce 'eminent domain' to acquire **10022 Madison Avenue** (corner of Madison & West Boulevard, located within bordering Wards 11 & 12). I applaud the only two council members, Ward 11 Nikki Hudson & Ward 12 Tanmay Shah, who voted 'Yes' in favor of allowing the City to utilize eminent domain to acquire the parcel for the building of a new Fire Station No. 23.

worked out of Station 23 and whose deaths were linked to occupational cancer. *For you as Council and for us as a community to allow these conditions to persist is unacceptable.* It's embarrassing for Cleveland. And, frankly, it continues to foster a terrible liability for the City. For a City Council with fifteen members, much of your focus may very well be on your individual wards; however, at the end of the day, each of your successes & triumphs along with losses & failures, collectively impacts us all. Regardless of geographical & ward boundaries, *we are one body and one community.* Council may not have the ability to bring back OUR community's two lost firefighters, but you certainly have the capability to clear the path for the Bibb Administration and Council Members Hudson and Shah to correct a pressing & very much dire situation with Fire Station No.

23, AND to fix an egregious mistake done under a misleading guise that should *absolutely never have taken place* under the previous ward's leadership in the manner in which 10022 Madison Avenue was presented to prospective buyers, who had specific development plans in mind, and ultimately purchased the property. As our own community's first responders have bravely and consistently done for us, may YOU act swiftly as a team & leaders to clear a path for eminent domain for the City to acquire 10022 Madison Avenue, and may Council not allow the hands of time to tick away and claim yet another death or cancer diagnosis associated with Fire Station No. 23. Rest In Peace: Shawn P. Calvey - National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (July 30, 2024) and Brian K. DeGARDEYN Obituary (October 2, 2023)
Jeon Francis (Ward 12 resident)

Reading the Plain Press May 6th article was journalistically disappointing. I have personally verified that the persons invoked in this article, including Ward 7 Leader Paula Kamph, Cuyahoga County Democratic Party Chairman David Brock, and Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley, were not asked for comments for this article. I do not understand why the Plain Press would publish an article that mentions prominent figures such as the aforementioned individuals without

LETTER
As Council is duly aware, Fire Station Number 23 is a hazard to the first responders working around the clock in that building. Many of us in the community met with Fire Captain McNeilly last year and saw the conditions firsthand. It was astonishing. Not to mention, the numerous cancer diagnoses that have stemmed from that station, and the heavyhearted deaths of two firefighters (Shawn P. Calvey and Brian K. DeGardeyn) who also

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PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, May 16, 2026; USS Cleveland commissioning ceremony, Cleveland's North Coast Yard: A Petty Officer, serving as a tour guide, welcomes visitors onto the USS Cleveland.

CONSENT DECREE

continued from page one that started when police mistook the backfiring of the car driven by Russell for gunshots.

Also occurring while the Justice Department investigation was underway, Tanisha Anderson died in police custody after being treated roughly by police responding to a call for a mental health crisis.

While the City of Cleveland in filing to end the Consent Decree says it has addressed these major issues concerning use of force and crisis intervention, the Consent Decree is a much more extensive agreement between the City of Cleveland and the Justice Department.

The Consent Decree has been likened to a contract that was entered into knowingly by both parties. Federal District Court Judge Solomon Oliver has jurisdiction over the case and appoints a Monitor to keep track

of progress in complying with the Consent Decree and to offer advice to the City of Cleveland on how to comply.

The City of Cleveland website describes the Consent Decree: "The City of Cleveland and Department of Justice (DOJ) entered into the Consent Decree to repair community trust and protect the constitutional rights of the people of Cleveland by identifying problems within the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) and by creating and implementing policies and practices to correct these problems. The Consent Decree identifies multiple problem areas for which the CDP is required to make policy changes, implement new training, or restructure Division practices. These areas include: (1) Community Engagement, (2) Community and Problem-Oriented Policing, (3) Bias-Free Policing, (4) Use of Force, (5) Crisis Intervention,

(6) Search & Seizure, (7) Accountability, Transparency, & Oversight, and (8) Officer Assistance, Support, and Supervision."

On May 13, 2026, the Cleveland City Council Safety Committee, chaired by Ward 10 City Council Representative Michael Polensek, heard testimony from members of the team charged with monitoring the City of Cleveland's compliance with the Consent Decree. Representatives of the Monitoring Team testifying at the City Council Safety Committee included Monitor Christine Cole, Deputy Monitor Melody Stewart (retired former Ohio Supreme Court Justice), and Charles See (who served for many years as Executive Director of the Community Re-Entry Program of Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry).

The Monitoring Team explained elements of its Eighteenth Semi-annual Report to the City Council

Safety Committee. The seventy-five-page report covers the period from July 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, and was published in March of this year. It explains the level of compliance for all the requirements in each of the eight areas covered by the Consent Decree. Cole noted that the goal is for the issues raised in each paragraph of the Consent Decree to meet Substantial and Effective Compliance.

While some parts of the Consent Decree meet the standard of Substantial and Effective Compliance, many of the items that the City of Cleveland agreed to address in the Consent Decree do not meet this standard. Cole said the Monitoring Team was especially concerned at items in the Consent Decree that it listed in Non-Compliance or Partial Compliance.

Monitoring Team member Charles See explained to the Safety Committee the Report's analysis of the portion of the Consent Decree titled Community Engagement and Building Trust. The Report that Charles See presented indicated 18 paragraphs in the Consent Decree, each representing a goal to address community engagement and building trust. The Monitoring Team examined 17 of the 18 goals. The City of Cleveland did not reach substantial and effective compliance for any of the 17 goals examined by the monitoring team.

The portion of the Monitoring Committee Report presented by See looked at the Community Police Commission (CPC) and District Policing Committees of each of the five Police Districts as entities that the City of Cleveland promised in the Consent Decree to use to engage with the community and build community trust. The report notes that the Community Police Commission was without an Executive Director for much of the second half of 2025 and the new Executive Director was not sworn in until January 19, 2026. Since only the Executive Director has the authority to hire staff, the

CPC experienced an extreme shortage of staff with only two of eight positions being filled.

Deputy Monitor Melody Stewart said, "The Cleveland Police Commission has not functioned as it was designed to function for quite some time."

Safety Committee Chair City Council Representative Michael Polensek said he was extremely disappointed in the CPC and noted City Council had "given them everything they have asked for from a budgetary standpoint." He noted holdups in the approval of command staff in the Cleveland Division of Police which he noted need to be approved by the CPC. Charles See said during the time of the hold up in promotions, the CPC was missing some board members and couldn't act without the board members. Monitor Cole noted an upcoming meeting with the Bibb administration to address some of the process issues involved in this hold up.

Charles See noted another factor inhibiting the function of the CPC involved the City of Cleveland's dragged out the process of responding to public record requests from the CPC.

It was also noted that the Cleveland Police Commission has not yet held an evidentiary hearing for any police officer accused of misconduct. Monitor Cole said manuals and training of CPC members would be necessary before that happens so that the process would be fair for police officers and for the community.

The Report noted the role of the District Policing Committees (DPC) in keeping the public apprised of crime reduction efforts and safety improvements as well as in gathering information and feedback from the community. However, the Report expressed concern about the lack of diversity (race, age, gender and background) of those attending DPC meetings. The Monitoring Team promised to join with the City in holding working group meetings with

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USS Cleveland becomes first Navy ship to be commissioned in Ohio

by Greg Rosenberg

The USS Cleveland (LCS 31) arrived at Cleveland's North Coast Yard on May 9 to begin a week-long celebration in advance of the ship's commissioning on May 16. The ship's crew hosted public tours, offering the community a first-hand look and a chance to engage with sailors. USS Cleveland will be the fourth ship to bear the name, but the first ship in the Navy's 250-year history to be commissioned in Ohio.

Built in Wisconsin, USS Cleveland contains components from several Northeast Ohio companies, including Sherwin-Williams, Cleve-

land-Cliffs, Lincoln Electric, Parker Hannifin, TransDigm and The Hellan Strainer Company.

Cleveland is a littoral combat ship, designed to operate near shorelines, to support various combat missions. At 387 feet long, a draft of 14 feet and speeds greater than 40 knots (46 mph), the ship can support a wide range of situations. It can carry two helicopters, a variety of small boats and is staffed by up to nine officers and 80 enlisted men and women.

The nonprofit USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation (www.uss-cleveland.org) was established

in 2019 to create and maintain a strong, meaningful, and direct bond between citizens of northeast Ohio and the crew of USS Cleveland. The Foundation has supported various ship activities including the week-long festivities and commissioning, with hopes to return the Cleveland here as a permanent museum and memorial at the end of her service life (20-25 years).

Approximately 15,000 attended the public commissioning ceremony which included presentations by Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, Representative Shontel Brown (OH-11) and Senator John Husted.



PHOTO BY MARYANN COYNE ROSENBERG

Saturday, May 16, 2026; USS Cleveland commissioning ceremony, Cleveland's North Coast Yard: USS CLEVELAND's main battle gun

CONSENT DECREE

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the District Policing Committees, the Cleveland Division of Police, and the Cleveland Community Relations Board to explore ways to "expand community participation."

The Monitoring Team offered the City Council Safety Committee similar analysis of each of the categories in the Consent Decree. It was clear from their presentation that the City of Cleveland has a lot of work to do to reach the level of compliance it agreed to in the Consent Decree. The Monitoring Team says its twice yearly reports offer suggestions on how the City of Cleveland Division of Police can reach compliance. Monitor Cole says working groups initiated by the Monitoring Team work with various stakeholders and share information about "what we believe remains to be done to achieve compliance."

In discussion of the Search and Seizures section of the Consent Decree, Deputy Monitor Stewart said the Monitoring Team was looking to examine the reasons for stops that resulted in searches. She noted that three times as many blacks were searched as non-blacks, yet the number of stops that found contraband is roughly the same for blacks and non-blacks. Committee Chair Polensek asked if the Monitoring Team can drill down to get data on a precinct or zone car level to help in the determination of the reasons for stops involving searches. The Monitoring Team indicated that it has encouraged use of data at the zone car level.

City Council members in attendance offered some comments. Committee Chair Polensek noted on several occasions that he would like to see the City of Cleveland reach compliance so it would be relieved of the \$10 million dollars a year it cost to cover the expenses of monitoring the Consent Decree. Polensek said,

"The Cleveland Police Department of today is different from what it was ten years ago ... we have made progress, but I want to see us get to the finish line."

Chair Polensek recommended that the Monitoring Team meet with the Cleveland Division of Police Command staff. Monitor Cole agreed it would be good to meet with the Command Staff but said that parts of the Consent Decree are beyond the purview of the Command Staff. She said the City Law Department, the CPC, Civil Service Department also need to be involved in working toward compliance.

Councilman Brian Kazy noted Cleveland Police have improved in Constitutional Policing, and Crisis Intervention. He also asked about Search and Seizure and why the Monitoring Team was just assessing Search and Seizure now. Monitor Cole said the policy for search and seizure has only been in place for five years. She said the Monitoring Team allowed the time for the Division of Police to work with implementation of the policy before a formal assessment occurred.

Kazy made a point of saying "The men and women in blue, who are out there doing the job, are doing the job without question the way they should be doing the job. Much different than they were ten years ago. So, I think this whole Consent Decree stuff is at an administrative level and it has nothing to do with how we are actually policing our streets today."

Deputy Monitor Stewart said, "The last thing you want to do is to spend all this money on the men and women on the street and then it gets backslid."

City Council Representative Joseph Jones of Ward 1 said in the community he lives in over the years he has personally seen the discrimination of the Cleveland Police. Given all the discrimination that

has occurred. Jones wondered why we are not in compliance. He said he appreciates Chair Polensek's question, "What is it we have to do to get in compliance?"

Jones spoke of how generations of black people "felt being picked on, their neighborhoods destroyed, and (individuals) put in jail for having small substances and their entire families broken and generations of destruction that has happened in the African American neighborhood. And then, to sit at this table and say we are not in compliance. Why we are not in compliance, when we have at this space and time, a black council president and a black mayor? To me it doesn't make any sense," he said.

Jones said one of the reasons he supported the creation of the Cleveland Police Commission was he felt there needed to be some balance. "I didn't like the way when the situation was initially brought to the leadership here at that particular period of time and how these people were disrespected when they tried to put a process in place and they finally took it to the peoples' ballot."

Jones spoke of the need for police to be properly staffed, equipped and trained. He said, "The best police departments are the departments that have the best constant, consistent training." Jones noted that once you start training police to deal properly with people who don't look like themselves, you have a better policing situation.

Ward 11 City Council Representative Nikki Hudson said the key pillars to the Consent Decree are community engagement and building trust. She then brought up a case that happened just last year where members of New Era Cleveland were arrested on serious charges and later ruled not guilty. She said it appears that the charges were brought in retribution for one of the members of the groups successfully



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, May 16, 2026; USS Cleveland commissioning ceremony, Cleveland's North Coast Yard: USS Cleveland

using the Cleveland Division of Police. Monitor Cole said she would not comment on the specific case. She said the Monitor might see the case in the review process after adjudication of the case. We will call it out when the procedures are not being followed properly. Deputy Monitor Stewart said the Monitoring Team is here to build a foundation so cases like that do not fall through the cracks.

Hudson also asked about the Cleveland Division of Police use of Flock cameras and license plate readers. She said she would like to see an analysis of the program. Monitor Cole said Hudson could get answers to her question by looking at the contract.

Ward 8 City Council Representative Stephanie Howse Jones expressed concern about bias free policing. She asked, "How would you recommend the City of Cleveland assess itself in a very comprehensive manner and not a selective manner?"

Monitor Cole said she thinks the City needs to figure this out for themselves and we are willing to help. She said, "What other cities have done is to establish a robust audit unit that looks in great detail at various levels of data, including down to the decision making around the stop."

Howse-Jones shared her thoughts about the implementation of the Cleveland Police Commission. She said, "From my perspective, yes there have been challenges, but working in this atmosphere is challenging. You cannot compare a group of people who did not know each other to come together to do Herculean work, and then there is basically the system itself, meaning City government. Most of the people who have worked in this building have been in opposition of it. People who have done things intentionally to derail it. And it has only been four years." She said you cannot compare the CPC, which has only been in existence for four years, with the City of Cleveland that has been around for 160 years.

Howse-Jones offered a way to test policing reform. She said she believes in the everyday people test. "If a person in Hough does not feel they can depend on Cleveland

— we are not doing that then. That is the litmus test. There are far too many Clevelanders who cannot say, assuredly, that, when I call, the right person is going to come, treat me with dignity and I'll have a level of resolve that is fair, whatever that may be. That is our litmus test. And we are not there yet."

Howse-Jones further stated, "We are not going to just dog the CPC when they have not had all resources that they needed to be successful, period. And I will continue to say that to my colleagues. And quite frankly when we talk about our investments in this Consent Decree — all investments are not equal. Just because it has been in effect for ten or 11 years does not mean it had a true partnership even with Cleveland City Council to ensure we can have constitutional policing here in the City of Cleveland. We haven't been doing our accountability."

Howse-Jones said, "I want community members, who I am in alignment with, who believe we should still be under a Consent Decree because the City, as a whole, has not shown we are thoroughly committed to this in a way that all of us can recognize it. I want to make sure that people who are in alignment understand, regardless of what you hear from Council Members, that there are Council Members that are standing in solidarity with you and know what our obligation is. As long as we are here, we are going to work to ensure that the Cleveland Police Commission has what they need and we are growing together. And we will do the best we can to assure that everybody that lives in the city, works in the city and plays in city, -- and everything else -- regardless of where you live, regardless of your socio-economic status-- know when you call, you can have trust. We are working there, and we are going to do what we can to make sure it gets there."

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PHOTO BY ANASTASIA PANTSIOS

September 6, 2025; The Art Garden Project, W.50th and Storer Avenue: Children create chalk art on the sidewalk in the Kids Art Garden.

TRANSFORMATIVE ARTS

continued from page one

plications and scoring documents came back eight months later with no responsive records, according to the news publication. Reporting has been inconsistent, and public records have been withheld. A lack of monitoring of institutional partners is apparent. Standardized terminology and basic requirements, including conflict of interest policies and public notices, have not been released.

Oddly, on the same day “Tax-Funded Arts Program Raises

Questions” appeared in *CoolCleveland*, on March 19, Brown sent a memorandum to Margarita Mason, an administrative assistant responsible for handling contracts and purchase requisitions, among other tasks, making it clear that the institutional partners were responsible for bookkeeping, not the City. Assembly for the Arts was responsible for oversight and administration.

“Any questions regarding the specific expenditure of funds at the project level must be directed to the institutional partner of record for each project,” wrote Brown. “In-

stitutional partners are the official grant awardees, and their financial records constitute the primary documentation of record for each project. Assembly for the Arts should be contacted for questions regarding overall program administration.”

Brown directed the seven institutional partners involved with the TAF project to retain “source documentation in support of their expenditures, including but not limited to executed contracts, vendor invoices, receipts, canceled checks, and proof of payment.”

Jeremy Johnson, president and CEO of Assembly for the Arts and fiscal agent for the TAF project, was copied on the memorandum.

ST. JOHN’S CHURCH

continued from page one

At this point, we’re focused on the current project and putting together the right team of people to discern what’s next.”

In keeping up with the neighborhood’s transformation in the last decade, Tom Hill along with the other 5 trustees of the Diocese Board are spearheading this effort of discernment.

The nuanced approach of the Diocese tending to this landmark building differs from Dunham Tavern in that St. John’s is just one of 76 parishes the Episcopal Diocese presides over. The Diocese is dealing with a few of their own parish closings in recent times. According to Hill, “The model of the church for the last few hundred years has been: you have parish churches set in the centers of towns, built of stone, and they have massive edifices, and they’re used once a week. The model for the church going forward has to evolve. The parish ministry is still a key part of what we do, but the community of faith can be defined in many different ways, and I would see [St. John’s] becoming some sort of faith community that honors the heritage of the building, that honors the African American experience in the United States, and even can be more than that.” He added, “We’re not going to sell this place. We’re not going to let it be condos. It’s too historical.”

It’s an exciting time for them, as they shore up the floor and begin engaging the community for the future of the building. Hill says, “We have funds that we were able to pull together for this particular project. But going forward, we’ll need to really understand what it’s going to be. When we partner with someone or something, some entity, nonprofit, the City, whomever, once we decide what this is going to look like, we’ll be able to find out what it will need.”

The removal of the original pews in the church, sending all but two of the pews to RBX to be recycled,

renders the church floor wide open making the future use of the space more versatile. In the spirit of the Diocese’s open-minded approach to what St. John can become, Hill says, “If we put pews back in, it can only be a church. And it needs to be more than that.”

The current use of the space includes block club meetings and yoga classes, temporarily being held in the adjacent Chapel. They expect the floor replacement to be complete by the end of April. “We’re excited about what this space could be and are looking for partners to reimagine the space to meet the needs of the community,” says Rebecca Miller.

Part of the responsibility of those who own historical landmarks is to maintain the foundation and the historical character. Dunham Tavern Executive Director Lauren Murray says, “it’s very expensive to care for these old buildings.” She points out, “that goes hand and hand with you having a building that is 200 years old and you have to maintain that.” That maintenance is a large portion of their operational budget.

Unlike Dunham Tavern, the Diocese absorbs the operational costs of St. John’s with no major fund raising, grants, or recent donors. Future projects at St. John’s may necessitate alternative sources of funding. For example, they received a quote to repair the stained glass at St. John’s for \$500,000.

Another large cost would be to repair the interior of the belltower. What used to be a place where runaway slaves found refuge and peered out of the windows waiting for light signals from boats ready to bring them to Canada, is a structure now deemed unsafe to ascend. The Diocese has no plans of any interior modifications or repairs to the church beyond getting the floor and thus the building functional, i.e. open for business. Tom says, “the biggest help that we can use right now is for people in the community to let us know what they want this to be, what this could become.”

Johnson could not be reached for comment.

Requests were made for information on project transactions and applications, quarterly progress reports, meeting notes, and payments to artists. Brown’s job description and salary were added to a recent records request, along with an explanation for why artists were required to sign a nondisclosure agreement (NDA), a point of confusion for many in the community. Whether NDAs can be used on federally funded ARPA projects depends, according to the U.S. General Services Administration, but they cannot lawfully conceal expenditures of public funds or award criteria.

CoolCleveland obtained a copy of the NDA issued by the city. The single-page document states that any member of the Transformative Arts Fund Program Arts Committee and/or Transformative Arts Fund awardee, applicant, institutional partner, and/or project administrator or contractor “agrees that any and all information related to the Transformative Arts Fund, including but not limited to deliberations and the selection of artists under the program and pre-award planning and execution shall remain strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties outside of the TAF Arts Committee, staff, and/or other TAF planning administrators prior to the City of Cleveland announcing the awardees.”

Several legal experts agree that since the City announced the seven awardees for the \$3 million project in July 2024, the restrictions of the agreement no longer apply, which raises questions about the embargo on public information from the City and the Assembly.

Following Brown’s presentation, a request for records was sent to all seven institutional partners: The Sculpture Center, Ingenuity Fest,

Cleveland Clinic, RedHouse Studio, Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, MetroWest Community Development Organization, and Campus District.

Emily Lee, executive director of the Metro West Community Development Organization, responded with a single-page list of transactions. Among the transactions were payments to Reishi Studio, Inc., founded by Ariel Vergez, the lead artist for the Art Garden project, totaling more than \$333,460. Two murals cost \$69,632, and the remaining amount was listed as “grant funds for art project.” She also offered to provide receipts.

None of the other institutional partners has responded at the time of this article.

Sources close to the TAF project report that a third-party evaluation is underway. Neither the Assembly nor the City confirmed or denied any involvement.

Despite failed attempts to access the records, a list of questions was sent to Councilman Austin Davis, vice chair of the HHS&A committee, at his request and prior to the meeting. The list included providing documentation that backs up the numbers included in the report and listed on the City’s website. But Davis failed to ask any questions. Neither did councilpersons Kevin Conwell, Kris Harsh, Nikki Hudson, or Tanmay Shah.

As the meeting ended, Ward 1 Councilman Joe Jones asked to see a list of murals and their locations. “I want to see all of these spaces,” he said. “I could not find the locations in your presentation. Do you have that somewhere?”

“The exact locations are not in the report,” said Brown, adding, “I would be happy to provide that to you.”

Article provided courtesy of *CoolCleveland*

Update on Memphis Pearl Project and other neighborhood events

by Lynette Filips

The pallets of orange Jersey barricades and piping which I mentioned in last month’s article, along with the fencing above them, have been installed around Pearl Road United Methodist Church, the former St. Luke’s United Church of Christ, and the Greenline Building(s) on the northwest corner of Pearl Rd. and Memphis Ave. in Old Brooklyn.

An article in the May 9th edition of *NEOTrans* stated that on April 24th the City of Cleveland had issued a permit to allow the interior demolition of the buildings to begin, even though “the capital stack was not yet finalized”, so that a \$2.34 million Brownfield remediation grant from the State of Ohio could be used before it expires later this year. Some internet responses to the news expressed excitement. Many others expressed sadness and anger.

HISTORY DAYS

But before I move on with more about that project, I want to promote something totally positive this month — the upcoming 2026 Cleveland History Days. The eleven-day celebration will take place from Thursday, June 18th, through Sunday, June 28th, and again some of the events will be taking place in Old Brooklyn.

As he has done for four previous years, Cleveland History Days partner and preservation advocate Tom Yablonsky will be talking about an aspect of advocacy for old buildings at Metropolitan Coffee, 4744 Broadview Rd., at the corner of Portman Ave. The exact title of this year’s talk, which will be presented with Antonin Robert from GBX, is “*Preservation Advocacy: National Register of Historic Districts*”. It will take place on Monday, June 23rd, from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. The speakers will address local listings and the

economic impact that being on the National Register can have. (This should be especially interesting because the buildings which the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation is intending to tear down at Memphis and Pearl are part of the “South Brooklyn Commercial District” on the National Register.) The publicity blurb for the free talk further states that Cleveland’s downtown ranks #1 in the nation in adaptive reuse and conversion of unused industrial spaces. Space is limited so registration is required; it can be done via Canalway’s website, www.canalwaypartners.com or directly at www.ClevelandHistoryDays.com.

TAKE-A-HIKE

For the second time, the Historic Gateway Neighborhood Corporation has included Old Brooklyn in its “Take-a-Hike” series and two of those free walks around downtown Old Brooklyn will take place during Cleveland History Days. They will be from 1 to 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 20th, and Saturday, June 27th. Registration is also required for the walk. Last year a staff member from the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC) led the hike. Park in the lot next to Nunzio’s cabinet shop, 4147 Pearl Rd., if you decide to attend.

MONROE CEMETERY

Another close-to-Old-Brooklyn Cleveland History Days event is at Monroe Street Cemetery on Sunday, June 28th, but really the best way to learn about ALL the offerings is to either pick up a booklet or visit Canalway’s website. Metropolitan Coffee has an ample supply and probably local libraries do, too. They are among the thirty community partners we have to thank for their sponsorship of these interesting events.

MEMPHIS & PEARL

Now getting back to the Memphis Pearl project, over the past few weeks I have been trying even harder than usual to get definitive answers to many questions. Except for the excellent help I have received from the Cuyahoga County employees I contacted, it has been an exercise in frustration. The last Minutes of the Board which Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC) posted were in November of 2025 and they were very much abbreviated compared to previous Minutes. My requests for information were not acknowledged by either the OBCDC or the City. I asked for very specific information — per the “*Ohio Open Records Law (149.43)*” — from Cleveland’s Department of Economic Development and heard nothing. Sales agents for local real estate offerings (e.g., the CVS and Theo’s buildings and parking lot, and the office/retail space on the southeast corner of Pearl Rd. and Broadview Rd.) did not return calls either.

Thanks to a friend who attends — and records — Ward 4 Councilman Kris Harsh’s monthly meetings at Estabrook Recreation Center and who subsequently sent me the transcript, I did learn something about the former CVS property. I now have the answer for everyone who has wondered online why OBCDC doesn’t save the historic corner at Memphis and Pearl and build their desired apartments across the street. It’s because they already own (actually, were mostly given) the properties on the north side of Memphis Ave., but they would have to buy the CVS and surrounding area property. And the asking price is \$2 million.

And here’s something I learned af-

continued on page 8

In Memory: Lennie Stover

March 11, 1957- April 22, 2026

by Greg Czadnel

Lennie Stover was the man. As Brenda Theuer described him, “A mountain of a man with a heart even bigger.” Kenneth Fryman agreed when he said of Lennie, “...in everything you did in life, you were the best at what you did.” Lennie lived by the motto it is easier to ask for forgiveness than ask for permission. Lorelei Mamie expounded, “A quick conversation with the guy and you’d LOVE him. Funny and kind with a real passion of continuing his work of the Red Line GreenWay - bringing green spaces to urban communities.” Eric Francis said “Lennie was a godsend. He dragged me over the finish line on two separate longtime goals” and Caroline Rostafinski Merk “...a passionate larger-than life man.”

RED LINE GREENWAY

On April 22, 2026, fans of multipurpose trails lost a truly tireless advocate with the passing of Lennie Stover. Lennie is most known for his work on the Red Line Greenway in Cleveland over the course of multiple decades. The idea behind the trail began in the 1970s. Red line Greenway connects the Near West Side to Downtown Cleveland while offering views of industry, nature and the city along the way. A final phase being planned over the Cuyahoga River and into downtown will make it even better.

Sean McDermott, chief planning and design officer for the Metroparks, said the trail provides transportation and recreation options while helping to connect urban neighborhoods. “We’re threading the needle,” he said. “It’s not only a unique experience to be next to a rail line but also knowing that we’ve got six connection points into the neighborhoods and the ability to further those connections in the future.”

Always positive, Lennie Stover said, “It didn’t come out as great as we envisioned, but we are not done yet as we work to extend it into downtown Cleveland as the highest elevated Greenway on an active rail line in America! Thank you to the thousands of volunteers who made this Greenway possible and saved over \$2 million to build it.”

DIFFICULTY

For Lennie, there was only one

hitch in the plan. In the center of the bridge, for 1,900 feet, tracks expand to fill the entire surface. That means that the trail would have to be cantilevered — extended — off the curving southeast side of the structure for those 1,900 feet. Steel or aluminum brackets would support the trail, which would stick out from the side of the bridge like a shelf. The skywalk concept could cost upwards of \$10 million, and could be viewed as redundant, given that the Detroit-Superior (Veterans Memorial) and Lorain-Carnegie bridges already have dedicated bike lanes and pedestrian walkways.

But Lennie said, “I am passionate about making the Red Line Greenway a reality. It will be a legacy for the people of Greater Cleveland and lift the lives of everyone in Northeast Ohio.”

Some might consider Stover’s quest an impossible dream. “He didn’t take offense when he was described as the ‘Don Quixote’ of Cleveland city planning.” In fact, he took it as a badge of honor because the errant knight in the Cervantes novel never gives up.”

SNAKE HILL

Snake Hill Trail was unpassable and neglected when Lennie came upon it, now after years of his work, mostly done alone, it’s a beautiful gateway to the zoo. Kids that played here decades ago hopefully will return now that we’re using this valley again as a community green space. (In fact, after Lennie graded the top of the trail, kids now go sled riding down the path.)

Eric Francis, who lives across from Snake Hill and helped to create Friends of Snake Hill, had only met Lennie the past few years. He said “I might have a lot of lofty ideas, good ideas - many people do. But Lennie put them into action. Not half measures, not vague conjecture, real action. His actions didn’t just bear fruit; they spread and dug roots.”

Lorelei Mamie, Eric’s wife went on, “Though we never heard of the guy, ...for several years in secret, he had been personally grooming the little Snake Hill Trail in the ravine across the street from our house. Eric maintained the top of the trail of debris and litter, and we assumed it was the MetroParks finally taking an interest in the area. I mean -

there was A LOT of work - fallen trees moved from the trail, gathered brush piles, a culvert installed — real work accomplished — some done by heavy machinery. It wasn’t until a MetroParks meeting late last summer when we tried to thank them and they admitted none of it was their doing. Eventually, we noticed a guy in the back snickering. That was Lennie.”

Our little group Friends of Snake Hill would be spinning its wheels without the dedication of Lennie Stover and Chris Feighan. Grateful for their steady hands and true stewardship of the earth. Lorelei and I had the great honor of spending a lot of time together with Lennie lately, and as much as I hurt, I’m trying to feel blessed to have been riding shotgun on Lennie’s train, even if only for a little while.

Nikki Hudson, city councilperson, had the incredibly good fortune to be introduced to local legend Lennie Stover after hiking the beautiful Snake Hill Trail he cleared while no one was looking. Lennie lived by the motto that it’s easier to ask forgiveness than permission, something I personally identify with, but the things Lennie did were not minor tasks like planting flowers, they were huge undertakings that often required heavy equipment and machinery, always masterfully operated by Lennie.

This man did not take baby steps, no hopping to the next lily pad. This man bit off chunks. Like this huge park bench as one person said, “That old bench is too big to move”. So, Lennie cut it down the middle with a chainsaw on the streets of Cleveland. Polished it up and moved the good half to his private little valley.” Or, using his front-end loader to regrade the top of the path of Snake Hill after his latest un-approved shift, moving picnic tables down the path, bringing back to life an old rustic switching station, or his work on the Red Line Greenway in Cleveland over the course of multiple decades. Lennie Stover was the man.

Lorelei Mamie recalled one Tuesday, we met up with Lennie down in the Snake Hill ravine after his latest un-approved shift on his front-end loader grading the top of the path before our next hike last Saturday. Along with Chris Feighan, we chatted at a picnic table Lennie had placed along the trail (again, without permission) and listened to the sym-

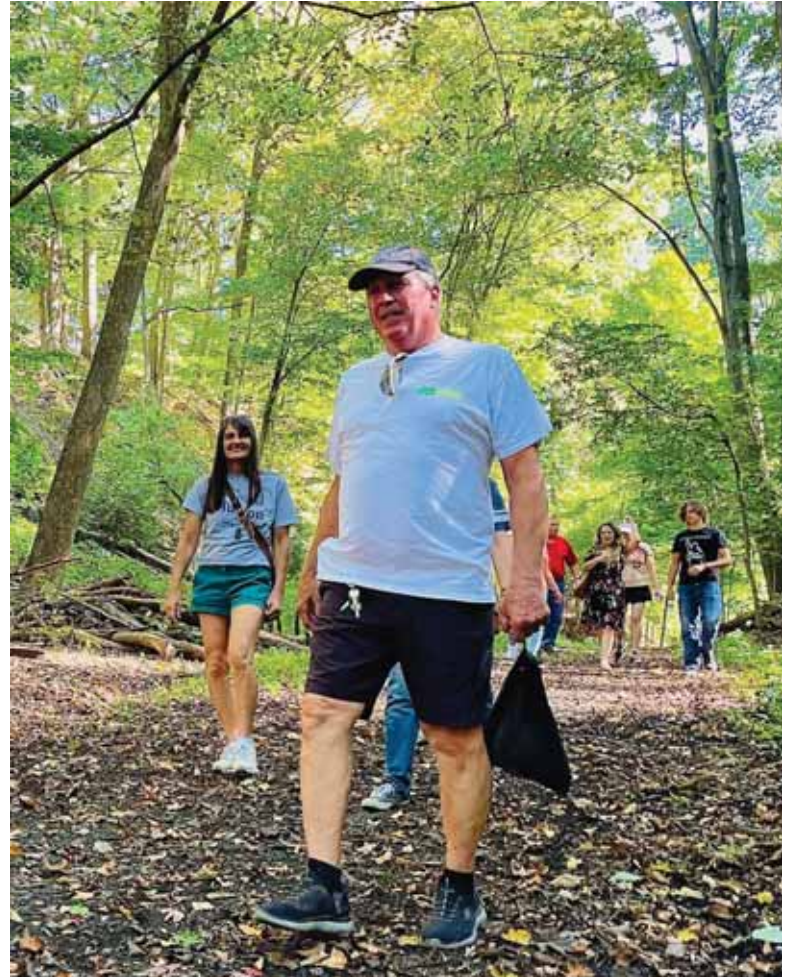


PHOTO BY LORELEI MAMIE

Sunday, October 5, 2025; Snake Hill Trail: Lennie Stover hikes the Snake Hill Trail with the Friends of Snake Hill and City Council candidate Nikki Hudson.

phony of birds and bats overhead as the sunlight faded.

Late last winter Lorelei said Lennie mentioned repurposing structures along the rail lines. He’s been working with the local TASCforce (Trail Advocates of Summit County force) to help guide their rails-to-trails efforts on the evolving Veteran’s Trail in Hudson. He “asked me about painting a mural on one in Hudson. I had never attempted a mural before, but I wasn’t one to turn down an art project. He had just four partial cans of paint to use I thought of a way he could get it started for me. I decided flowers might brighten up the end-of-winter look. Keep in mind - we did not have permission, this was on property we don’t own, in a county we don’t live, doing something we weren’t asked to do. But Lennie had a vision! So, for several March and April Sundays, the three of us would meet up behind a park and start to beautify a worn out, rusty rail switching station.

Sam McNulty shares another story about Lennie Stover. He recalled yet another spring volunteer cleanup day in Market Square Park where we were trying and failing to remove the root balls of dead trees in the park with only hand tools.

I called Lennie to ask if we could borrow his power tools someday to do the job and within literal minutes he rolled up the hill like the f---king cavalry in his giant tractor coming from the Redline Greenway and within minutes we had all the root balls yanked and were planting the new trees in the freshly dug out soil.

GIVING THANKS

Eric Francis offers thank everyone who worked for YEARS to make the Snake Hill Trail a reality. Lennie Stover who wouldn’t quit, and the Metroparks leadership of Brian Zimmerman, Sean McDermott and Joe Roszak.

Sam McNulty said Lennie Stover was a legendary human that left our world too soon — and left our world far better than he found it. Lorelei described him as big-hearted in nature; Lennie had chosen to be an organ donor, so his generosity of self will live on in more than the stunning green spaces he championed for our region.

Lennie’s last night of freedom was spent like so many. Working with friends, laughing when the work was done.

As Sam McNulty posted, “There’s a bright new star shining in the sky tonight. much love to you, Lennie.”

COMMUNITY BOARD

continued from page 2

Conference! On Friday, June 12, join the Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Initiative for this free event, which features a resource fair, fatherhood awards luncheon, town hall meeting, informational workshops, and more. 8 am to 4 pm at the Crowne Plaza Hotel (1260 Euclid Ave). Register now at hhs.cuyahogacounty.gov/fatherhood. Questions? Call 216-348-3967.

PARADE THE CIRCLE: The 34th annual Parade the Circle will kick off summer on Saturday, June 13 in the University Circle neighborhood. The parade will begin at noon at the north entrance of the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) and, as always, will feature vibrant and imaginative costumes, towering puppets, floats, and intricately crafted masks. This year’s event coincides with the CMA’s 110th anniversary as an institution and the United States Semiquincentennial. For more information, visit clevelandart.org/events/parade-circle.

PRIDE IN THE CLE: Cleveland’s annual gay pride parade and festival will take place this year on Saturday, June 6 from 11 am to 6 pm. The parade will begin at 11 am, starting at Public Square in the center of downtown and marching over to its final destination, Mall B. After the parade, the festivities will continue on Mall B, with free live music, food trucks, vendors, and more. Visit [lgbt-cleveland.org/pride](https://cleveland.org/pride) for more information.

TRI-C JAZZ FEST: The 47th annual Tri-C Jazz Festival will take place from Thursday, June 25 through Saturday, June 27 in and around Playhouse Square. The event includes various free outdoor performances underneath the chandelier outside of Playhouse Square on Euclid Ave. throughout the festival weekend. The streets are closed in the district to allow for concerts, shopping, food and beverage vendors, street performers and

much more. For a full list of performers, visit tri-c.edu/jazzfest/outdoor-lineup.

HISTORY DAYS

CLEVELAND HISTORY DAYS is an annual celebration of Cleveland’s history featuring fresh perspectives and highlighting our proud heritage. Through 11 days of events, explorers can immerse themselves in the captivating stories that shaped the city. For the most up-to-date program details and to register for events, visit ClevelandHistoryDays.com. Some of the many events are listed below.

WEST SIDE MARKET HISTORY VIRTUAL TOUR: Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 1979 W. 25th St. | 216-293-9380 Available during Market open hours, dive into the rich history of West Side Market with a self-guided virtual tour! As you make your way around Cleveland’s iconic public market, scan designated QR codes to pull up content about West Side Market and Ohio City history.

SACRED SPACES: ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH: Tom Yablonsky & Brother Phil Bernier, Sunday, June 28, 2-4 p.m. St. Ignatius of Antioch | 10205 Lorain Ave. 216-251-0300. Hear from Tom Yablonsky, Brother Phil Bernier and Jason Lewis about the establishment of the church by Bishop Rapp to unify multiple ethnic groups under one parish. Tour the church’s magnificent architecture, and hear about updates on the Let There Be Light initiative to bring a new lighting plan to the church’s interior. The program is offered in memory of Tim Barrett who chronicled dozens of Cleveland church histories. Free, registration required

SUMMER PROGRAMS BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL LEAGUES: The City of Cleveland offers a variety of youth baseball and softball leagues, ranging from T-ball (ages 4-7) up to Senior Baseball (ages 16-18). Equipment and uniforms are provided! Visit any of the city’s recreation centers to sign up today.

FREE SUMMER ART CAMPS: Join Art House, Inc. (3119 Denison Ave.) this summer for our free summer camp offerings. From painting to pottery to mixed media and imaginative projects, campers will explore a variety of artistic techniques in a welcoming and inspiring environment. Our summer camps take place inside and outside in our new Creative Garden space. The camps are open to all ages and families. Questions: You can reach Art House directly at 216-398-8556 or by emailing Tarias@arthouseinc.org or lvoss@arthouseinc.org. Register now at arthouseinc.org/summercamps.

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Rent escrow helps tenants gain leverage for needed repairs

by **Tonya Sams**

Many tenants are unaware of their rights when a landlord fails to make repairs to their property to keep it livable and safe. One option is rent deposit or rent escrow.

"A tenant can use rent escrow and pay their rent to the Clerk of Court to protect themselves from being evicted, while trying to get the landlord to make repairs," said Barbara Reitzloff, a Supervising Attorney in The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Housing Practice Group. "Tenants do not need an attorney to start the process."

There are a few things that tenants should know before starting the rent escrow process.

"It's a fairly simple process, but tenants have to plan ahead," said Barbara. "Unless it's an emergency, like no heat in the winter, tenants must give the landlord 30-days' notice in writing listing the repairs needed. The tenant should give the landlord the notice with the rent. The landlord then has a reasonable amount of time, usually 30 days, to make the repairs. If they don't, and the tenant is current in rent, the tenant can pay the next month's rent into escrow. The tenant can't wait until they get a 3-day eviction notice for nonpayment and then decide to put their rent into escrow."

Paying rent into escrow protects

a tenant from being evicted for nonpayment but, tenants sometimes take other actions that **do not** protect them.

"You can't just stop paying rent because of the condition of the rental," Barbara said. "You also can't make the repairs yourself and then deduct the cost from the rent."

Once the rent escrow process begins, some courts, like the Cleveland Housing Court, hold mediations to try to help the tenant and landlord work something out, including releasing the funds to the landlord if the repairs are made, or splitting the money on deposit with the tenant if they want to move out.

"The Court holding onto the rent is the incentive to get the landlord to make repairs. It's more effective with private landlords as opposed to those in subsidized housing, because the landlord in subsidized housing will still receive the larger subsidy payment while the tenant pays their portion into the court."

Tenants also can make a complaint with the city about the condition of the property.

"The city will send an inspector out. If there are code violations, they'll cite the landlord. The landlord must make the repairs to satisfy the city, and if they don't, they can be charged criminally," said Barbara. "So not only will the landlord not



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, April 25, 2026; The Madison Avenue Community Garden at Story, 9900 Madison Avenue: Garden beds awaiting completion.

receive rent, but they could also end up with a criminal misdemeanor charge. Some violations could cost the landlord \$1,000 a day for every day out of compliance."

To learn more about rent escrow:

laslev.org/RentDepositBrochure.

Having issues regarding housing? Legal Aid may be able to help! Attend a free Legal Aid Brief Advice Clinic. For a full schedule: laslev.org/clinics.

To apply for free legal services, call 888-817-3777 or apply online: laslev.org/apply.

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

MEMPHIS & PEARL

continued from page 6

ter numerous conversations with the County. Although Cuyahoga County is listed on OBCDC's website as one of the sponsors of the Memphis Pearl Project, they are NOT a sponsor and were surprised to see their name and symbol listed there. In addition, a tool on the County's website called "MyPlace" has been a great help to me in looking up information (January 1, 1975, and more recently) about all the real estate parcels on OBCDC's Memphis Pearl site. All the facts I gathered could be the contents of a separate, future article, but for now I do need to correct something I wrote in last month's article. I said that when it became available, OBCDC had purchased a lot on 'Short' Broadview to use for parking for their proposed

apartments. In reality, the Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation — aka, the Land Bank — pretty much gave the property (\$5 sale price, plus a \$5 filing fee) to OBCDC on February 1st, 2022. That is exactly when OBCDC submitted an application for Low Income Housing Tax Credits to the State of Ohio; they were hoping to demolish everything on the corner except Pearl Road United Methodist Church and have a developer named NRP build low-income housing there. But the State did not award them the money.

And getting back to the May *NEOTrans* article, if you have the interest, take the time to carefully read what Harrison Whittaker wrote. He is not the journalist who usually covers Memphis and Pearl and he does not write with certainty about what will happen after environmental issues are abated. He uses the word

"could" and speaks of phases. This interior work is Phase 1. Phase 2 could happen by the end of the year.

So far, things aren't going well. OBCDC posted online that shortly after the barricades were erected the former St. Luke's building was vandalized twice. Stained glass windows were ruined; \$150,000 in damage was the amount cited.

The barricades around the project make both vehicular and pedestrian traffic dangerous day and night. The lack of street lighting in front of the Greenline Building(s) makes it even more perilous at night. The stained-glass windows are irreplaceable, but the loss of human life there would be far worse.

And, would OBCDC actually start demolishing historic structures before all the money was in place to build something else? We were promised that no such thing would happen.

Till next month, if you want to refer to any previous *Plain Press* articles about this historic Old Brooklyn corner, access them on the *Plain Press*' website, <https://plainpress.blog>, or on the HSOB's website, www.oldbrooklynhistory.org.

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