



BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO 27H AND LAKE



Meena Natarajan (left) and Ingrid Rasmussen stand at the future site for the Pangea Theater on the 27th Ave. block between Lake and 31st Street. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Pangea World Theater to relocate to downtown Longfellow

By IRIC NATHANSON

The 27th Avenue block between Lake and 31st Street bustled with community life. The block included a Latino night club, a popular Indian-Bangladeshi restaurant, and a community organization serving Native American youth. But that was before George Floyd's murder in 2020, and the civil unrest that destroyed much of downtown Longfellow, including the block on 27th Avenue.

Now, two years later, Meena Natarajan hopes to breathe new life into this key Lake Street commercial node. Natarajan plans to relocate the Pangea World The-

ater, which she heads as executive director, from its current home in Lyn Lake to the largely vacant 27th Avenue block.

Natarajan's organization seeks "to build bridges across multiple cultures and creates sacred and intersectional spaces," according to the group's website. "Through art, theater and creative organizing, we strive for a just world where people treat each other with honor and respect. We believe that artists are seers giving voice and language to the world we envision."

While construction of Pangea's new center is still several years away, the foundation for this promising project has al-



Downtown Longfellow at 27th and Lake is one of Lake Street's important cultural and economic hubs. We need to make sure that hub revives and flourishes."

Ingrid Rasmussen

ready been put in place. The arts group has created a unique partnership with Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, located down the street from the proposed theater site.

Prior to the events of 2020, the site served as the home for MIGIZI, a Native American social

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Johnston appointed city coordinator

Former and current staff raise concerns about a 'toxic, anti-Black work culture'

By CAM GORDON

Amid complaints of a racist work environment raised by city employees and with a Human Resources investigation underway, a divided Minneapolis City Council approved the mayor's nomination of Heather Johnston for city coordinator on June 16.

Johnston has served as the interim city coordinator since August 2021 and previously worked as city manager for the cities of Burnsville and Chanhassen. She also worked as the director of management and budget and interim chief financial officer for the city of Minneapolis in the early 2000s.

The city coordinator's office works with every other department in the city and the city coordinator oversees hundreds of staff from several departments, including, 311, 911, communications, emergency management, finance and property services, human resources, information technology, intergovernmental relations, neighborhood and community relations, sustainability, and race and equity.

During a public hearing on May 23, 13 people spoke in favor of her appointment. This included former council members Elizabeth Glidden and Robert Lilligren, former Mayor R.T. Rybak, Downtown Council CEO Steve Kramer (also a former council member) and former Minneapolis Chief Financial Officer Pat Born. Those speaking in favor also included two former city employ-

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REMEMBERING GEORGE FLOYD



People gathered May 25-28, 2022 to commemorate the 2nd anniversary of George Floyd's death. Others lost to police violence were remembered, and their families, who continue to push for change, were honored. Above, Terrence Floyd, George's brother from New York, pays his respects at the site on Chicago Ave. where his brother was killed by police on May 25, 2020. [More on page 7.](#) (Photo by SBH Photography)

ALTERNATIVE TO POLICE

Behavioral Crisis Response report on successes and challenges of Canopy Roots

By JAN WILLMS

It has been a little more than four months since Minneapolis Office of Performance and Innovation launched the Behavioral Crisis Response (BCR) team's pilot project, Canopy Roots. It is the nation's first 911-based mental health first responder program.

BCR was started to provide crisis intervention, counseling and connection to support services as an alternative to police responders.

A report on the success and challenges of the project was presented to the city's Public Safety Committee in late April, highlighting the responses that have occurred in the first quarter of operation. The city has a \$6 million, two-year contract with the Black-owned Canopy Mental Health & Consulting based in Richfield for \$6 million. It diverted some of its police funds into the pilot program.

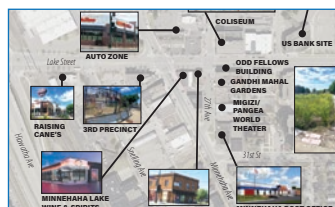
BCR uses two vans, initially serving daytime shifts and now operating 24-7 weekdays. "There are two unarmed, highly trained mental health practitioners on each van," said Gina Obiri, program manager for the performance and innovation office. She said that situations involving weapons, physical assault or medical emergencies are not directed to BCR.

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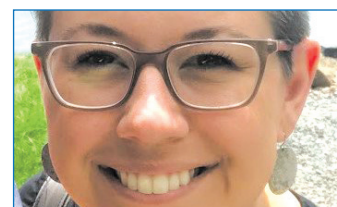
Minnesota's Prince gets long-awaited honor with a towering tribute

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Lake Street Council: what's behind and what's ahead PLUS 27th & Lake today

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THE CITY GARDENER Yes, there are some great lawn alternatives

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A TOWERING TRIBUTE

UNDER
THE HOOD

BY SUSAN SCHAEFER



Something under the hood is not immediately apparent or obvious. This column will uncover stories that span the neighborhoods covered by TMC Publications.

A BODACIOUS BIRTHDAY BASH DRAWS FAR-FLUNG FANS. WHAT TOOK SO LONG?

To create something entirely new, never seen, touched or heard before – something that resonates deeply with the beholder – is a hallmark of genius. Many such virtuosos are often misunderstood or unrecognized in their own time or homeland. Yet, native Minnesotan, Prince Rogers Nelson, known as Prince, was wildly acknowledged and adored by ardent fans around the world.

Why then, did it take our community so long to recognize its own prodigy?

THE PRINCE MURAL PROJECT

Back in 2015, well before his death on April 21, 2016, Prince's former marketing manager, Sharon Smith-Akinsanya, was busy seeking a public tribute for Prince, even as the eye-popping, five-story Bob Dylan wall mural on the corner of 5th and Hennepin was getting finishing touches by

Minnesota's Prince gets long-awaited honor



world-renowned Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra.

With Prince's consent, Smith-Akinsanya had quietly approached Betsy Hodges, then-mayor of the Minneapolis, who enthusiastically supported the idea. However, critical additional official support was lacking.

Shockingly, even Prince's untimely death did not generate the political will needed from the authorities to commit the necessary resources to honor him with a public art project. Determined, Smith-Akinsanya continued full steam to move the Prince Mural Project from planning to center stage, testifying before state legislators and arm-wrangling other civic and private sector leaders.

ADD JOAN VORDERBRUGGEN – THE MAGIC SAUCE

Eventually, Smith-Akinsanya met and landed the consummate ally, Joan Vorderbruggen, and new blood began to flow.

Possessing the will-power of an army of municipal leaders, Vorderbruggen, then-Director of the Hennepin Theater Trust, in fact, had purple running in her veins. Having spearheaded the Bob Dylan mural project, Vorderbruggen has too many accolades to list, but she is credited for her seminal role in multiple creative projects that revitalized the beleaguered Hennepin Theatre District.

Vorderbruggen is a founding member of the Placemaking Leadership Council and is nationally recognized as a placemaking and public art expert. Legendary for her "Made Here" twice-yearly window displays that transformed downtown storefronts into mini public art galleries, Vorderbruggen is affectionately considered an authentic civic booster and people-connector with a heart as large as

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The newly unveiled Prince mural is at 8th Street and 1st Avenue on Parking Ramp A. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

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Muralist Hiero applies finishing touches to his masterwork. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

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the murals we've come to know her for.

Yet, even with her dogged involvement, it still took a confluence of events to move the Prince Mural forward. Happily, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and city of Minneapolis cooperated to offer Parking Ramp A's towering façade, and tragically, the murder of George Floyd revealed the power of art as a form of community healing. Finally, the Prince Mural Project garnered the support it needed.

A HIERO FOR A PRINCE

Prince ranks among a short list of luminaries known by one name. So, it is entirely fitting that internationally known muralist, Hiero Veiga, who goes by the solo moniker Hiero, was selected from a field of 60 original artists to design and render the long-overdue tribute.

Evolving a hyperrealist style for the past 21 years, this self-taught artist's work, which began with graffiti writing, has advanced to impressive worldwide commissions such as the exterior of Miami's Museum of Graffiti.

In the months before his death, close confidants attested to Prince's newly ignited spirit. At the time of his death, global luminaries sang his praises: Mick Jagger stated, "His talent was limitless." Oprah



Civic leader Joan Vorderbruggen was a driving force behind the Prince Mural Project. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

Winfrey proclaimed, "The doves are really crying now." And then President Barack Obama (uncharacteristically commenting on a celebrity) pronounced that Prince "was one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time, ... a virtuoso instrumentalist, a brilliant bandleader, and an electrifying performer...Today the world lost a creative icon."

The task set before the artist was monumental. Hiero's bold 90-foot captures the

colorful phases of Prince's well-documented life.

And so it was that at the beginning of June 2022, several "Crown our Prince" celebrations marked an early 64th birthday bash to unveil this towering tribute.

I chose Prince's actual birthday on June 7 to capture the images for this column and serendipitously got to meet both the cultural impresario, Vorderbruggen, and the muralist, Hiero, who was putting



New Yorker visitors Dorothy Billis and Twila Perry view the new mural on their annual Prince pilgrimage. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

finishing touches on the masterpiece.

But it was two fans decked head-to-toe in Princely regalia who symbolized the impact of Prince's life and death on a far-flung audience. New Yorkers, Dorothy Billis and Twila Perry, have been making a yearly pilgrimage to the Twin Cities since Prince's death.

Endearingly, the two did not know each other in New York but met here the year following Prince's death. Since then, they have become fast friends and are committed annual travel partners for the yearly festivities.

"We actually discovered Prince after his death," confessed Billis. "We're from a different generation and never knew his music." "But once we heard his music, we were hooked," added Perry. How did this year's mural unveiling compare? Responding almost in unison, they declared that it was the best party yet.

POSTSCRIPT

Prince rewrote life's rules – he was never constrained by them. He broke free of the bonds of socioeconomic, race and gender, as well as those of the tightly controlled entertainment world. His lyrics, compositions, and instrumentality defied genre; his groundbreaking, risk-taking break with the recording industry's star making prison unshackled him to not only explore new musical worlds but to plant his gender-blended glyph in the stratosphere. Now it literally soars on a wall across from his beloved First Avenue for all the world to see and pay homage.

Susan Schaefer is a widely published independent journalist, creative writer, and poet. Her articles appear in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, PBS' online magazine, Next Avenue, Next Tribe, and beyond. She was columnist and features writer for Minneapolis' Southwest Journal and Minnesota Good Age magazine.

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VIEW FROM THE
MESSENGER

BY DENIS WOULFE

Sales manager

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It is hard to believe that the *Messenger* is celebrating its 40th anniversary. My first experience visiting stakeholders from the Longfellow neighborhood was when *Messenger* founder Bill Milbrath offered to take me to a Longfellow Ministerial Association meeting back in 1986. Bill and his wife Maureen had started the *Messenger* back in 1983 and had approached deRuyter-Nelson Publications, who provided their typesetting for the *Messenger*, about buying out the *Messenger* so the Milbraths could move on with the next phase of their retirement. deRuyter-Nelson Publications, which provided typesetting and graphic design services to a host of clients, was at the time publishing the *Midway Como Monitor* in St. Paul as their sole community newspaper.

When we had met with the Milbraths initially about purchasing the *Messenger* it was obvious that the *Messenger* had been a very carefully considered labor of love for the two of them. Years prior to our discussion about the sale of the *Messenger*, I remember when they were doing their initial research before publishing a prototype for the *Messenger*. They went around to a host of community newspaper publishers in the Twin Cities to search out best practices and discover what it was like to publish a neighborhood newspaper in the Twin Cities. They were very methodical in their investigation before they even published their first issue. They took their mission to bring community journalism to Longfellow very seriously.

In the files they shared with us for our discussions about the sale, it turned out that at the very beginning of their journey publishing the *Messenger* the Milbraths had developed a rather long list of the institutions and stakeholders that they thought should be the subjects of stories in the *Messenger* during their time

MY MEETING WITH THE LONGFELLOW MINISTERS



This photo of Nanc Wischow (ad sales and graphics) with owners Bill and Maureen Milbrath ran in the last issue of the *Messenger* that they put out in June 1986.

as publishers. These were some of the storylines that readers of Longfellow needed to know about, and not having a community newspaper put Longfellow at a great disadvantage in their minds. When they met with us, the Milbraths felt that they had done pretty much what they had set out to accomplish, not to mention achieving their overarching goal of establishing a community newspaper that would link all these important stakeholders together with businesses and residents.

The Milbraths believed strongly in that connection between community stakeholders and the *Messenger*. And one of the strongest connections they formed from the very beginning, was between the *Messenger* and local churches. Thus, Bill Milbrath's suggestion to set up an introduction between

the ministers of the Longfellow Ministerial Association and myself.

We gathered at one of the churches in Longfellow and the meeting was well attended. Bill introduced me and I said a few words about deRuyter-Nelson Publications and our hopes for the *Messenger* and our experience in publishing community newspapers. The *Monitor* in St. Paul was at the time published as a broadsheet, meaning that each page was the size of a daily newspaper, and the pastors asked about what our intentions were for the *Messenger*. Would it be a broadsheet or would it be tabloid size? Several of the pastors were of the opinion that a tabloid newspaper was easier to hold and read on a bus, for instance, which made it a more convenient size. Given the number of questions and

the detail of them, it was obvious that the pastors considered the *Messenger* to be THEIR community newspaper and they intended to keep it that way. I was touched by their fierce devotion to the *Messenger* and their recognition what a difference it had made in building community in South Minneapolis.

After about 30 minutes most of the pastors had a chance to ask a question or two and there was a nice exchange of ideas about community journalism. Finally, one pastor said: "Denis, one last question before you go. Obviously one of our hopes is about the perspective the *Messenger* would have going forward. I'm just wondering... you know that big structure that crosses the Mississippi River between the two cities?"

"Do you mean the Lake Street Bridge?" I responded, a little bit surprised by the obvious question. The room erupted in muffled laughs and Bill chirped in with: "Denis, you passed the test!" The pastors, thinking that I was from the St. Paul side of the river, assumed I would think of the bridge as the "Marshall Avenue Bridge," but since my sister and brother-in-law had lived in south Minneapolis for many years, I always thought of it as the Lake Street Bridge and was very familiar with all the landmarks on that side of the river. The pastor's point, of course, was that for their community newspaper, perspective was everything, and they wanted to make sure that their community newspaper would have their own perspective. Well said!

Years later, I often think about my meet-up with the Longfellow Ministerial Association and their strong sense of belonging to the *Messenger*. Today, under the ownership of TMC Publications, we are proud to be continuing the tradition of publishing a community newspaper that continues to link important stakeholders and provides a sounding board for residents and business owners alike to share their views on building a better community in which to work and live.

>> More photos and stories about our 40 years @ LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

LETTERS

Hope article sheds light on system that needs to change

The article "Failed by Family Court" brought back many memories for me of living in a county just north of the Twin Cities, teaching a life skills class for high risk students at the local high school and running a county-wide mentoring program for high-risk students. This county has an above average rate of alcohol and drug abuse, including meth. It is also one of the two counties in Minnesota with the highest rates of poverty. Many of the students I worked with came from families

where there was some type of drug or alcohol abuse, neglect, or extreme poverty.

I remember saying often that the problems in this county reminded me of inner city issues, but these were White kids living in trailer homes in the country. I made so many reports to child protective services in my time there that the county attorney told me that my name came across her desk more than any other name had in years.

I constantly asked why more was not being done to follow up with my concerns or hold the parents accountable for these reportable items with their children. I was told that "they were working on it," but that "the law favored the children to stay in the home with the biological parent," and that it took "an extreme situation to

remove the child from the home." I was both shocked and saddened with the level of abuse and/or neglect that needed to happen to constitute the child being removed from the home.

I hope this article will shed light on what happens with CPS, the schools, and law enforcement do not act in the best interest of the child. It's a tragedy that needs to change!

Nicole Sheldon
Standish resident

What about extra 20% of services as property taxes go up?

The May edition of the *Messenger* contained quotes from city council mem-

bers implying higher property values raise property taxes. Please follow up to clarify. It is my understanding that the budget determines the amount collected, property values determine how those taxes are shared. To illustrate: if every property value doubled, the city would halve the tax rate – not double spending. This puts the council in charge, not the assessor, and its members are free to stabilize our tax burden.

The city budget rose 42% from 2014 to 2022 while inflation was about 22%. I hope the council members can point out the extra 20% of services we're receiving.

Reed Mitchell
Longfellow

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Email letters, guest commentaries, press releases, notes and memories of the newspaper over the years to tesha@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

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News for you!

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Story ideas always welcome.

Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be e-mailed to news@longfellownokomisMessenger.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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The *Messenger* is for profit and for a purpose – and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible soci-

ety that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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Family, friends seek answers in Winston Smith killing

— ONE YEAR LATER —

By JILL BOOGREN

One year after law enforcement officers killed 32-year-old father and comedian Winston "Boogie" Smith Jr. at the top of an Uptown parking ramp, his family, friends and community members gathered at Powderhorn Park to remember Smith – and to demand answers.

"Not a single day goes by that I don't visualize how they [killed] him," said his mother Tijuana Wilson at the June 3 gathering.

On June 3, 2021, Smith had lunch at Stella's Fish Café (1400 W. Lake St.) with a woman he had recently begun dating, Norhan Askar, before returning to the parking ramp. Once inside their vehicle they were boxed in by eight unmarked trucks and SUVs, and Smith was fatally shot. Part of the "North Star Fugitive Task Force," which included U.S. Marshals and deputies from the Hennepin and Ramsey County sheriffs' offices, the officers were allegedly there to arrest Smith for illegal possession of a firearm.

"They planned to come kill him. If they was comin' to arrest him, they had time to arrest him when he was in the restaurant," Smith's mother said. "They followed him from the restaurant to the parking lot, waited 'til he [got] into the car and caged him in."

Smith's sister, Tamara Wilson, said it's been so hard on the family that they're not the same, as a family or as individuals.

"We're just livin' life with no answers and broken hearts," she said. "It just doesn't make any sense. We need answers. Now, sooner than later. It's already been a year. We have not heard anything."

No one in the family has been contacted by Mayor Jacob Frey or the former or interim Minneapolis Police Chief since Smith was killed, and they still have many questions about the circumstances surrounding his death.

Authorities reported seeing a gun, but Askar, who was in the passenger seat, said she never saw a gun and that Smith was trying to use his cell phone to go live on Facebook. According to Askar, officers were not in uniform and did not identify themselves when they surrounded the vehicle shouting commands with guns drawn.

Winston's brother, Kidale Smith, questioned the logic of interviewing witnesses on the first day while giving officers



Winston Smith's brother Kidale Smith (center) speaks as Winston's mother, Tijuana Wilson (left) and sister, Tamara Wilson (right) stand by his side. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

the "luxury" of a few days off.

"We need to be questioning the police that day of. There don't need to be no wait, no. We need to ask you, 'What was you doin' at this time in this position when you decided to shoot this man? What was he doin'? Where was you standin'? How many people shot?' So we can... get the real story right then and there."

Authorities claim there is no body-worn camera footage of the encounter, although there are differing accounts as to whether wearing and activating them was required of the U.S. Marshals and/or local officers working alongside them [President Joe Biden signed an executive order on May 25, 2022, which mandates federal law enforcement agencies to adopt body-worn camera policies "that mandate activation of cameras during activities like arrests and searches and... expedite public release of footage following incidents involving serious bodily injury or deaths in custody"].

In its investigative report, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) did not release any officers' names in order to protect the identities of officers working undercover. Unicorn Riot, however,

reported in October 2021 that at least two officers' names were mistakenly revealed that were otherwise redacted in the document: Hennepin County Sheriff's Deputy Timothy Inglett and Ramsey County Sheriff's Deputy Luke Mickelson. According to the report, each deputy met with senior special agents that same evening, had his photograph taken and his duty weapon, equipment and clothing collected as evidence. The BCA has removed the case file from its website while they scan and re-redact, but the report has already been downloaded and shared.

Coinciding with the recent Lyndale Open Streets event (June 5, 2022), flyers naming the deputies were affixed to lamp posts, utility boxes and road work signs along Lyndale Ave., north and south of Lake St. They include the image in street paint that reads "Stop the Cover Up" and the message "We won't forgive. We won't forget."

The investigation was referred by Hennepin County to the Crow Wing County Attorney, who ruled in October 2021 that the use of deadly force was "authorized under Minnesota law" and no criminal charges would be brought against any of the officers involved.

Community and family are calling for an independent investigation into the matter.

'REST IN PEACE, WINSTON'

A self-described "music friend" of Smith's described him as a very talented young man who worked hard, a wonderful person who smiled and laughed and "took command over the room when he walked in."

Smith's brother Kidale said Winston wanted to inspire people to better themselves.

"Rest in peace to Winston. This is far from done, man," he said. "We need to get them officers out and they need to be held accountable, and they need to take responsibility for what they did, and they need to be fired. That's it. Fired and go to jail. I'm not stoppin' unless that's the case."

THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE

Toshira Garraway Allen of Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence asked guests to also remember activist Deona Marie Knajdek, who was killed June 13, 2021, when motorist Nicholas Kraus rammed his SUV into a peaceful demonstration taking place at Lake St. and Girard Ave. on behalf of Winston Smith.

Though at the time the mayor referred to the incident in a press conference as a "car accident," witnesses reported that Kraus accelerated toward them. According to the Hennepin County Court Complaint, Kraus told police the same thing, and surveillance video confirms these accounts.

On June 16, 2021, the Hennepin County Attorney's Office charged Kraus with intentional second-degree murder and two additional felony counts of assault using a deadly weapon for injuries sustained by others at the scene. Kraus' trial is scheduled to begin July 11, 2022.

"When you stand up for justice, when you stand up for what's right, our lives are on the line," said Garraway Allen. "We have a right to peacefully assemble, we have a right to be out there, and we had a right to stand up for Winston Smith that day without bein' targeted and without someone bein' murdered... [who] was peacefully assembling out there this time last year."

My brother has cancer

My brother has cancer! I'm stunned! I'm in shock! What now? My inner and outer worlds are out of sync. I feel scared. I feel so alone. Are you with me, dear reader? If you are, you have taken the plunge into the river of life experiences, with me writing and you reading Stories and Journeys. My brother has cancer. You are devastated. What now? What would you do if the C word came into your life the way it has in mine? Tell your self, tell others or tell me by writing news@longfellownokomisemessenger.com.

Writing is what I do. Amy Laederach, CHTP and Healing Practitioner, once told me that writing is how I process my life. Subsequently Tesha M. Christensen asked me to write a column about what I am learning, thinking, experiencing. So, here I go! Are you with me, dear reader? Right now everything seems unreal. Yet I am a proclaimer and celebrator of BEING REAL.

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

I feel like I am dying inside. I imagine I am returning with my brother to the Oak Park/Highland Park neighborhood of north Des Moines. Sharing the upstairs of the brick house on the corner of 12th and Douglas where we grew up. Starting our lives over. But that's not real.

I feel like I am losing a version of my

STORIES AND JOURNEYS

BY DONALD L. HAMMEN



brother I have held in my awareness for a very long time. Now there is a new version of my brother, unfolding, that includes the reality that my brother has cancer. It still seems not real, like I am living in a dream called "My Brother Has Cancer." What now? A new version of my brother seems to be emerging that I call being with cancer, dying not just yet.

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE CARE PLAN: OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND GROW TOGETHER

Myself, my brother, sister-in-law, and my two nieces seem to be embracing Richard's diagnosis as an opportunity to learn and grow. An integrative medicine approach. A quality of life approach to health revolving around the roles of adequate rest/sleep, nutrition, a relaxation approach to stress along with lifestyle changes such as food is medicine. We are pulling out all the stops in pursuit of a customized care plan that meets all our needs.

MY BROTHER HAS MATTERED TO ME IN SEVERAL WAYS

A little over 20 years ago I decided to explore buying a house. My brother became part of a support group I created made up of people with home-buying experience. Richard became a mainstay in support of my home buying/owning experience in the Greater Longfellow-Hiawatha neighborhood. There is evidence of his handyman skills that have contributed to the maintenance of and improvements to this house and property. He was willing to take on the most difficult of projects, rarely charging me for labor, only materials. There is a sense in which this house and property belong to my brother, as well as me. How do I replace someone I regard as irreplaceable?

A NEW CHAPTER. CREATING SUPPORT.

A new chapter has begun in the life of my brother. I have made a conscious decision, along with others, to be part of that new chapter not knowing how we might be changed by the experience. I already know there will be sad days and happy days while always staying positive. I am hurting right now. To help myself, I am starting to create support for myself. This includes reaching out to Gilda's Club.

FACING CANCER THROUGH DANCE AND THE ARTS

I have reason to believe that the folks

at Gilda's Club know something about how dance and the arts can help people face a cancer diagnosis. I look forward to re-reading a blog post by Amy Laederach called "Dance as a Path for Healing: Reclaiming One's Self." This is one of her Expressions by Amy blog posts that she had written in her blog at www.delightful-healingarts.net. It is a source of inspiration for me.

I look forward to re-joining Dancing in the Streets each Friday, 5-6 p.m. as I check out chance2danceMN on Instagram or email Nan at nandancez40@gmail.com to get the current location. A time and space where it is possible to experience freedom of movement and expression of self through the joy of dance.

I know my brother reads Stories and Journeys in the Messenger from where he resides in Iowa. This column has been written with him in mind.

My brother who has cancer, matters to me as I cry out from the depths of my being. I love you my brother, with all my heart, more than you will ever know.

His name is Richard A. Hammen. He matters to me!

In gratitude! Stay tuned!

Donald L. Hammen is a longtime south Minneapolis resident, and serves on the All Elders United for Justice steering committee.

LSC: What's behind and what's ahead

Lake Street Council helps businesses and nonprofits restore Lake Street

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Despite initial fears that outside investors would scoop up properties along E. Lake Street after the 2020 Uprising, not a single one has been sold to outside interests, reported Lake Street Council Executive Director Alison Sharkey.

During the LSC annual meeting on May 18, 2022, Sharkey said one of the things she is most proud of is helping over 20 entrepreneurs begin the process of rebuilding from the ground up with an investment of \$1.4 million through grants and forgivable loans. This includes Midori's Floating World Cafe, Uncle Hugo's and Uncle Edgar's bookstores, El Rey Car Audio, MIGIZI and Gandhi Mahal.

"In 2020, when the pandemic hit and especially after George Floyd was murdered in front of all of our eyes launching a nationwide call to action, everyone in this room was affected," said Sharkey. "Each of us was called to not only help rebuild our community, but also to help address the deep-seeded inequities that got us here."

LSC supports small businesses with capital and advising. It promotes Lake Street by telling its stories and shaping its reputation. LSC is "an advocate to make sure our community has a seat at the table and we push for policy and investment that supports our neighborhood," said Sharkey.

The Lake Street Council has provided \$1.8 million in grants and forgivable loans to 51 businesses and nonprofits on Lake Street corridor.

"This funding isn't nearly enough to help all Lake Street businesses really thrive, but we're proud to be able to contribute to the recovery process in this way," said LSC Senior Creative Operations Manager Theresa Swaney.

It will cost an estimated \$250 million to restore Lake Street. The majority of that, \$225 million, is needed for acquisition, pre-development and gap funding.

LSC helped secure \$46 million from the city of Minneapolis and the state to aid businesses damaged along the Lake Street Corridor and other places in the city.

"The success of Lake Street depends on addressing our city's racial disparities," said Swaney. LSC is partnering with Black Women's Wealth Alliance to offer coaching to Black-owned businesses on Lake St., and has launched Be Well Lake Street to give businesses free and confidential counseling.

The Lake Street Reimagined Placemaking grants supported 26 artists and organizations to create public art and host events along the corridor, including recent window-cling murals in the vacant restaurant space at W. Lake and Hennepin.

"We are seeing a difference," said Earlsworth 'Baba' Letang of the Neighborhood Development Center, who is the Lake Street Council Board Vice President.

The organization itself has grown and changed. Its four staff members (Sharkey, Swaney, ZoeAna Martinez and Matt Kazinka) have been joined by seven more: Ruth Howell, Oscar Carrol, Yusra Mohamud, Marie Campos, Russ Adams and Alex Tsatsoulis. LSC lost its location in the Uprising at US Bank, and moved to the Midtown Exchange building at 2925 Chicago Ave. #190.



Yusra Mohamud of the Lake Street Council facilitates a discussion between David Jenkins of First Independence Bank (center) and local real estate developer PJ Hill. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

What's next for the LSC? A survey of businesses and nonprofits along the corridor identified these top five needs: 1) Crime prevention, safety and livability, 2) Attracting customers to the corridor, 3) Hiring qualified employees, 4) Racial equity, and 5) Developing a shared vision for the future.

REWRITING THE NARRATIVE

Facilitated by Yusra Mohamud of the Lake Street Council, two people shared with luncheon attendees what they're doing in the community.

Panelist David Jenkins of First Independence Bank grew up in Phillips. He announced that the state's first Black-owned bank will be opening its second location at E. Lake St. and Hiawatha Ave. in July inside the Hennepin County services building. (Read article on expansion online at www.swConnector.com) "How do we together make a difference?" Jenkins asked. "This is a time to really rewrite the narrative."

PJ Hill grew up near Little Earth at 26th and Cedar, and played professional basketball. He's a financial adviser, Minneapolis NAACP Minneapolis Vice President, and a local real estate developer.

He wants real estate to reflect the community. "How do I liberate the community economically?" he asks himself. Hill is working to "change the narrative and create generational wealth."

'WE BELIEVE IN YOU'

"We've got to use these crises as a chance to do things better and differently, not getting back just to the old normal but blowing by the old normal and pushing a true transformation on Lake Street," said Mayor Frey during the meeting.

The Lake Street Council raised over \$12 billion from over 70,000 donors to help fund recovery.

The city stepped up too, said Mayor Frey, designating \$4.5 million to help over 40 businesses remove rubble. The city put \$7.65 million into a commercial development fund that enables entrepreneurs that have owned their own business to own not just the business but the underlying property. "The goal here, of course, is when things come back the values rise, and the people and business owners don't get the boot but rather realize the gain in the value themselves," said Mayor Frey. "This is something we need so desperately."

The \$7.65 million is just the beginning."

Mayor Frey pointed out that he has also heard from people that a big piece of recovery is safety. "Safety and recovery, they have to work hand in hand," said Mayor Frey.

The new LEAD (Let Everyone Advance With Dignity) program will launch in the coming months. This will put social workers on Lake St. to work with those who have experienced some form of trauma, such as addiction and homelessness, in an effort to reduce police interactions for low-level offenses.

As the city has experienced attrition in the police department, it is working to recruit a new chief and officers. This is happening at a time of a nationwide shortage. Minneapolis has signed two joint powers agreements. The state of Minnesota will provide patrol officers to work two shifts on East Lake and West Broadway for four hours on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The other agreement is with Bureau of Criminal Apprehension for 13 additional investigators, who will be embedded with city officers to crack down on serious crime. "You will see more of a presence," said Mayor Frey.

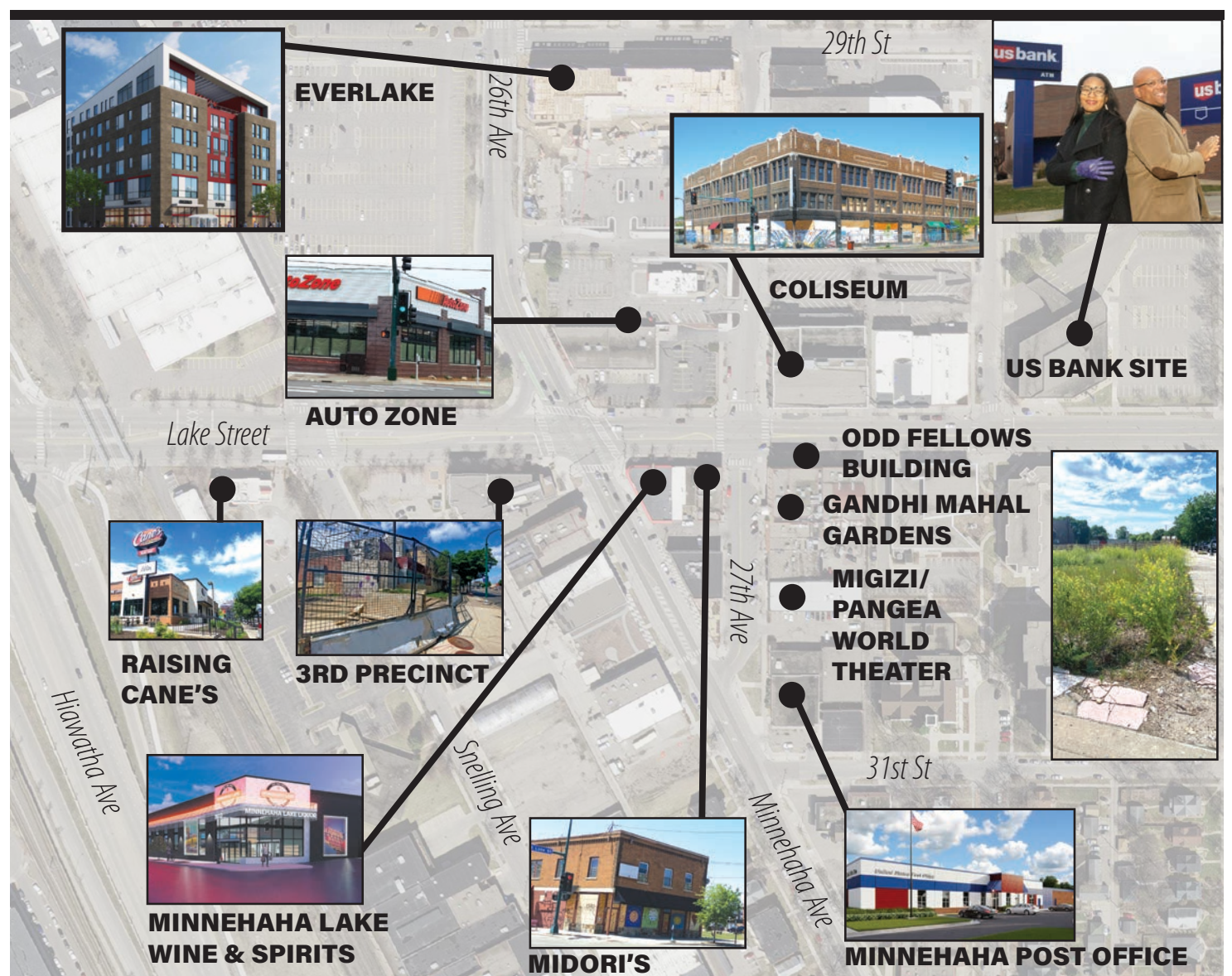
He pointed out that the city has set aside \$1 million for cameras and lighting.

Office of Violence Prevention efforts are ongoing and will be working with local organizations and businesses.

"This has to be a partnership where we're locking arms and attacking some of the most difficult issues hand in hand," said Mayor Frey.

"We believe in you. We know that Lake Street will rebound. We know that you all have the strength and resilience - due to everything you've been through over the last couple of years - to come back. You're here right now. You have stayed on Lake Street. You have stayed in this city because you want to make it a better place and you believe in our collective strength."

He added, "We are going to be an example that others can follow."



EVERLAKE Burned to ground, rebuilt and currently leasing
COLISEUM Redesign to renovate
US BANK SITE Property donated for affordable housing, retail and more
ODD FELLOWS Site leveled; for sale

GANDHI MAHAL Future development planned
MIGIZI/PANGAEA MIGIZI moved; Pangea World Theater to build at site and move from Lyn Lake
POST OFFICE Construction on new

building to begin this summer
MIDORI'S Still boarded
LIQUOR STORE Plan to rebuild
3rd PRECINCT Community meetings held and 75% don't want precinct reopened there; building

remains boarded and fenced
RAISING CANE'S Arby's burned; Raising Cane's rebuilds and opens summer 2021 with Cub and Target
AUTO ZONE & WENDY'S Rebuilt and reopened 2021



REMEMBERING GEORGE FLOYD

>> From 1

Raycurt Johnson (left) and Butchy Austin (right) play music at Say Their Names Cemetery during the vigil on May 25, 2022. Reverend Jeanette Rupert spoke at the vigil, which was followed by a candlelit walk via the Mourning Passage along Chicago Ave. to the George Floyd Memorial. Once there, members of the Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center did a bronze pour of a sankofa bird.

Photos by SBH Photography

More photos online @
LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com



The Heart & Soul Drum Academy group performs in George Floyd Square. Other musicians included 29:11 (a South African group making its first international performance), KNOWN Mpls, Brass Solidarity, DJ Sophia Eris, Minnesota Orchestra, and Minnesota Chorale.



Saturday events included live music and a DJ, along with a kids zone, self-care fair, a kids sports zone, food trucks, art, and mutual aid. The Longfellow Nokomis Messenger was one of the event sponsors.



Angela Harrelson, Paris Stevens and Mahlia Jones speak about their nephew and cousin, George "Perry" Floyd, on Saturday, May 28.



Old homes! old hearts! Upon my soul forever
Their peace and gladness lie like tears and laughter;
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BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO 27H AND LAKE

>> From 1

service agency. "Holy Trinity has had a long history with MIGIZI," explained Ingrid Rasmussen, the church's lead pastor. "We have partnered with their organization on a wide range of efforts. When MIGIZI decided to move farther west on Lake Street, they told us they wanted to keep the ownership of their parcel within the BIPOC community."

Rasmussen and her congregation knew there were outside groups interested in the property so Holy Trinity decided to purchase the site. "Everything had to happen quickly," Rasmussen said. "There was no time to put together a pre-development plan. We at Holy Trinity decided that we could act as a short-term land bank for the site, in order to keep it in community hands. We purchased the property and are holding it for Pangea until the theater is ready to move ahead with its development project."

Rasmussen and Natarajan had connected through Longfellow Rising, a new organization working to revitalize 27th and Lake. "Pangea has been involved in the 27th and Lake community for quite a while. We have staged performances at the Hook and Ladder so we know the community," Natarajan said. "After getting to know Ingrid through Longfellow Rising, we realized that our two organizations were a good match. That our partnership came together so quickly says a lot about the church and its commitment to social justice. It also says a lot about Ingrid, who she is and her leadership abilities."

Natarajan says that Pangea's new facility on 27th Avenue will have multiple uses. "We want it to be a living building, a building that reflects the ideals of environmental justice and social justice. We will have a performance space, but we



This site drawing illustrates what the new Minnehaha Post Office will look like when it is constructed later this year. It is slated to re-open late this fall.

want to do other things. We want to grow food and make the center a community gathering place with a coffee shop.

"During our 26-year history, social justice has always been a key principle that guides our programming. We are particularly interested in expanding opportunities for theater directors who are women and people of color. Those groups have historically been under represented in the ranks of performance directors. Poetry displays in the windows of shops along Lake Street is also one of our projects."

Pangea is currently involved in predevelopment for the new downtown Longfellow center. "We are doing the visioning that will help us design a building that will meet our multiple needs. At the same time, McKnight Foundation is helping us set up a capital campaign. We don't yet have a fund-raising goal. That is some-

thing that the predevelopment process will help us determine. The design of our project should be completed this fall, and then we will launch the capital campaign. It will probably take us an additional two to three years before we are ready to begin construction."

GANDHI MAHAL NOT RETURNING

Two other vacant properties on 27th Avenue are still awaiting development. Ruhan Islam continues to own the site where his Gandhi Mahal restaurant once stood before it was destroyed during the civil unrest. Islam is working on plans for the property, but he says that Gandhi Mahal is not coming back. "Fine dining is no longer affordable," he explained, "so we are developing a new concept for a food court as an alternative to a stand-

USPS TO START BUILDING A NEW EAST LAKE POST OFFICE THIS SUMMER

Unencumbered by the need for a capital campaign, the U.S. Post Office plans to begin building a new East Lake postal branch this summer. The new facility will occupy the site of the former East Lake Post Office at 31st and Minnehaha that was destroyed by fire during the civil unrest in 2020.

According to Desai Abdul Razzaq with USPS Corporate Communications, the Postal Service anticipates a late fall 2022 opening date for the South Minneapolis office. Abdul Razzaq said USPS will provide more information about the new branch office once construction plans are finalized.

A rendering of the new building shows a one-story white box embellished with red and blue panels.

alone restaurant. We want to bring back all those flavors that people enjoy, but do it in a way that is more affordable." Islam says that his new venture, Curry in a Hurry, now located on East Franklin, could be one of the occupants of the new facility.

Islam knows he will face serious challenges when the time comes to put together a financing plan for his ambitious development. "Building costs are rising rapidly," he noted. "Projects that cost \$300 per square foot to build just a few years ago are now facing costs that are double that amount. We will need to collaborate with our community partners to make this project happen."

ODD FELLOW BUILDING FOR SALE

At the corner of 27th and Lake, Ade Alabi has decided to sell his vacant site. Alabi purchased the historic Odd Fellow

BREATHING NEW LIFE >> 9

Welcome to

Lake Street

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Website serves as online hub for racial equity and information

REACH TWIN CITIES CONNECTS

By JAN WILLMS

Following a tragedy like the murder of George Floyd, it can be difficult for a community to see any glimmers of hope. But after his killing and the social unrest that followed, neighborhoods began to rebuild and seek ways to prevent such incidences from happening again.

And one way to do that is to connect with the community and provide up-to-date information about what is happening and how community members can participate.

Enter Racial Equity and Community Health (REACH) Twin Cities. "In 2020 the Lake Street Leadership Recovery Coalition came together directly in response to what was going on in our city after George Floyd's murder and the civil uprising," said Christina Beck, communications and development director for REACH.

"Community centers, businesses and residents met, and out of that coalition REACH was developed," she said. The mission of REACH is to serve as a central information hub for updates, resources and opportunities around community recovery, renewal and wellness.

"The Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association (PPNA) was awarded a \$100,000 unsolicited grant from the McKnight Foundation, which was giving away 10 of these grants," Beck continued. These grants were given in direct response to the projects that were working toward healing and recovery after the murder of George Floyd.

PPNA took on the administration of REACH, and Beck began her duties in September of 2021.

"REACH is the online hub of resource

es and information," Beck said. "In the beginning, there were a couple of people contracted to seek events and news that highlighted our promoted projects, services, programs and initiatives that seek to improve the elements of health and wealth and reduce the disparity within and around the communities most affected, with large populations of BIPOC.

"Those news and events were then loaded into the website created from the McKnight funds. We have begun to make the necessary revisions and updates, see what is working and working out the cogs in the system. We are going to be guiding light traffic and promoting to other organizations, like other neighborhood associations. Now we have an employee more dedicated to this work. We have no contractors, but partners with the community," Beck remarked.

She said REACH Twin Cities wants to use its website for things that build awareness, fuel action, attract resources and promote health and awareness, particularly to communities most impacted by the uprisings.

"When somebody is looking for what they can do, they can come to the REACH website to inform themselves by finding resources for further education, articles pointing to policies that need their voices and an ever-changing calendar of events," Beck advised.

There are several examples of what the REACH website broadcasts. One item is a call to assist Miss Linda, a resident who was being evicted from her home. "Someone at PPNA is dedicated to advocacy work, so while REACH may not be able to help a person directly, we are able to broadcast through our social media channel and on



Christina Beck of REACH listens in to four homeless activists via a Zoom meeting describe police activities at the scene of a homeless encampment. (Photo by Terry Faust)

our personal time. This is a developing story that has affected many in the neighborhood, and people are excited to help Miss Linda stay in her home," Beck said.

Freedom Street Health, groups of local citizens who are doing work in real grassroots form, forming a radical model directly from people to people, has its information listed on the REACH calendar of events.

Beck noted that a group of community members talking about the history of inequity in their neighborhoods has had their sessions listed on the website. A clean-up of the Corcoran neighborhood was promoted.

"We look for something that prioritizes positive connections," Beck said. "There have been a lot of words in the last few years; we want to see intentions trans-

ferred into positive action."

Beck said REACH Twin Cities has been working mostly remotely. She is currently the only employee, but the communications manager from PPNA does a lot of work on the backside with the website. "That person definitely has a role in the website, marketing and outreach," Beck commented. "There is nobody at PPNA who does not touch REACH."

Beck said she has primarily an editorial and procurement role at this time. "PPNA will be a part of it as the website becomes more dynamic and accessible."

The community is invited to make the website a useful resource, submitting thoughts and ideas as well as current events to the calendar and seeking information on neighborhood activities.

The website is reachtwincities.org.

BREATHING NEW LIFE >> 8

building at that intersection only months before the building burned to the ground following the murder of George Floyd. "To move ahead with a development on that site would cost at least three times what I paid for the property," Alabi said. "That is a financial risk I am not able to take. I am hoping a community-based developer will come forward to purchase the property. I would like to see this corner maintained as a community asset, if at all possible."

DREAM THERE, FUNDING ISN'T

While firm redevelopment costs for the 27th Avenue projects are not yet avail-

able, Ingrid Rasmussen knows the price tag will be substantial once the numbers come in. "I can say without hesitation that there needs to be a major influx of funding to make the dreams on that block become a reality," she said. "The dreams are there and the will to make something happen is there, but very little funding has made its way into these projects, at least as of today.

"There was strong BIPOC ownership energy on that block prior to the uprising. As a community we need to do what we can to make sure that vitality returns to the block and continues to grow. Downtown Longfellow at 27th and Lake is one of Lake Street's important cultural and economic hubs. We need to make sure that hub revives and flourishes."

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Minnehaha Falls Landscaping creates outdoor environments that grow beauty, and support health and wellness. From this foundation grows our garden division, Giving Tree Gardens and our advocacy branch, Bee Safe Minneapolis.

Yes, there are some great lawn alternatives

THE CITY GARDENER

BY LAUREN BETHKE,
MASTER GARDENER



Like many Master Gardeners, I volunteer at farmers' markets every summer, answering yard and garden questions from the public. This year, I've gotten quite a few questions from people who are having trouble with their grass and want to know if there's something else they could grow instead – something easier to care for, something that doesn't need a lot of watering or fertilizing or mowing, maybe even something that benefits pollinators. Luckily, there are a number of great alternatives to a traditional lawn.

If you're considering replacing your lawn with something else, there are two main ways to go about it. The first is renovation – in other words, removing all the existing sod to create a clean, blank slate of bare soil for your seeds or plants. The other option is overseeding. This involves cutting the lawn very short, aerating to loosen any compacted soil, and sowing seeds on top of your existing grass. There are benefits and drawbacks to each option. Renovation is more labor intensive but ensures that no grass remains. Overseeding is a bit easier to do, but grass will grow back among whatever other plants you choose (which may be a positive or negative, depending on your plans and preferences!).

Now let's talk about plants. First, if you like the look of a grassy lawn but want something more drought-tolerant and easier to care for, consider using fescue grasses. Most lawns are largely made up of



A typical bee lawn includes some combination of white clover, creeping thyme, and self heal. (Photos submitted)

Kentucky Bluegrass, which is very tolerant of high foot traffic, but has shallow roots and requires regular watering and fertilizer applications to stay in good shape. Fescues, on the other hand, are slightly more fragile, but can remain green for weeks without water, can tolerate shade and poor soil conditions, and are very cold tolerant. Additionally, they grow relatively slowly and require less frequent mowing. For extremely high-traffic areas, consider a mixture of fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass to reap the benefits of both.

An increasingly popular option is to plant a mixture of fescue grasses and low-growing flowers to attract pollinators – commonly referred to as a "bee lawn."



In addition to fescue, bee lawn seed mixes generally include some combination of white clover, creeping thyme, and self heal. These flowering plants can tolerate being mowed and stepped on, so you can still use your lawn for recreation and relaxation while providing food for pollinators at the same time. I recently planted a bee lawn at my own house and although it's certainly not a perfectly uniform carpet of grass, I love that it will need little maintenance to stay green throughout the summer and will attract pollinators to my vegetable garden!

For areas with less foot traffic, there are several groundcovers that make an excellent low-maintenance alternative to tra-

ditional turf. Creeping thyme and self heal are commonly part of a bee lawn mix, but either one could be planted alone (or in combination) to create a low-growing carpet of tiny flowers. The foliage of creeping thyme has a lovely fragrance and it blooms from July to September. It prefers full sun. Self heal can grow in sun to part shade and is adaptable to many soil types. It has small purple blooms from June to August. Self heal is native to Minnesota and, according to a study done at the U of M, is especially good at attracting native bees.

Moss is another option for a low-maintenance green ground cover, especially in moist, shady areas (although a few species can tolerate drier, sunnier conditions). You can buy moss from nurseries or online, or you can collect it yourself (with permission). To plant moss, clear the area of debris and weeds and water thoroughly. Press the moss patches into the ground and continue watering daily until the moss is established, about 2-3 weeks. The patches will spread and join together to create a dense, soft carpet. A moss lawn will never need to be mowed, and if planted in the right area, will rarely need to be watered. Although moss can't tolerate a lot of foot traffic, you could place stepping stones to create a path.

As you can see, there are lots of interesting, low-maintenance grass alternatives. And remember that you can start small – no need to replant the whole yard at once. If there's a particular area of your lawn that doesn't grow well, try planting something else there and see how you like it!

For more information, check out the University of Minnesota Extension Yard and Garden website. Extension resources are written by experts and contain the latest and most reliable research-based information. Happy gardening!

NENA kickball tournament and fundraiser coming July 23

NOKOMIS EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

BY BRANDON LONG
executive director
Brandon@nokomiseast.org



Enjoy a family-friendly summer afternoon and raise money for neighborhood events and programs!

Vie for the title of best kickball team in Nokomis East! Get an 8-10 person co-ed team together for the mother of all tournaments on Saturday, July 23 (rain date: Sunday, July 24) at Keewaydin Park.

The team registration deadline is July 15 and includes a \$100 registration fee per team.

While at our payment site, which can be found at www.nokomiseast.org/kickball/, please consider making an additional team donation! There is a minimum of eight players per team, but no cap on the maximum number for your co-ed team. Players must be 15 years or older. There are no Nokomis East residency requirements – all are welcome to play. Teams will play a minimum of three games. Ball-park classics and snacks will be available for sale during games for teams and their

screaming fans.

We are also offering three ways for local businesses to be involved in this popular community event and raise funds.

Event sponsorships – there's a sponsorship level for all budgets. We are seeking online/check donations for the event. Raffle donations – We will be organizing a raffle during the event. We are seeking gift cards / certificates. The raffle theme is "Health and Active Living." Contact nena@nokomiseast.org with information on your donation, and we will arrange a pick-up time. Individual and groupings of businesses are strongly encouraged to field your own team. Start designing your team t-shirt and promote your business.

Questions? Contact NENA at 612-724-5652 or nena@nokomiseast.org.

NOKOMIS EAST GIVING GARDEN INVITES YOU

Are you interested in gardening, building community, and raising food for good local causes? You should get involved with the NENA Giving Garden at Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls (5212 41st Ave. S). The next upcoming work day is scheduled for July 9! Email nena@nokomiseast.org for more information.

NENA HIRING

NENA is currently searching for a new



Volunteers build and tend raised garden beds at the Giving Garden at Trinity Lutheran Church. Food grown will be donated to a food shelf.

full-time bilingual community organizer. This position will work with NENA's executive director and communications manager to implement the organization's outreach and engagements initiatives, including work with cultural communities, renters and grassroots leadership. Help us spread the word. Applicants can apply by visiting www.nokomiseast.org/communityorganizer.

START PLANNING YOUR SPRING PROJECTS

Check out the housing resources available through NENA for homeowners, renters, and residential property owners in the four Nokomis East neighborhoods of



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ALTERNATIVE TO POLICE >> from 1

100 CALLS A WEEK

Taylor Crouch-Dodson, another program manager, said the Canopy Roots BCR program has averaged 100 calls per week in its first quarter of existence. "There have been 1,650 calls, and BCR has been called to every neighborhood and precinct in the city," he said.

The 911 operators are trained to dispatch the calls to the appropriate resource, whether it be BCR or the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) or another agency. The calls are directed based on Problem Nature Codes (PNCs) and there are over 130 different PNCs. Calls for the BCR are divided into priority 1, a behavioral crisis response, or priority 2, a behavioral crisis response welfare check. Another call code is Person in Crisis (PIC).

"A PNC code can change throughout the nature of the call," Crouch-Dodson explained. "A call may start as one thing and end up being another." Overall, 88 percent of MPD calls have been diverted to BCR calls.

Regarding the fact that mental health crises are not limited to just weekdays, Crouch-Dodson emphasized that the project is hoping for full coverage on weekends as well, and more vans are needed.

"This is a pilot program," he said. "Canopy Roots being able to staff so quickly is great."

Minneapolis Office of Performance and Innovation Director Bryan Smith said that time is required to get the job descriptions out for the mental health professionals and to train them and the 911 operators. "We are serious about getting the right people to do this," he said.

POLICE POSITIVE ABOUT BCR

In his report to the committee, MPD Deputy Chief Eric Fors said that anybody who has worked with the public recognizes the crises out there. "Law enforcement wants that deeper level of understanding," he said. "The feedback from the rank and file has been very positive. They have generally asked when BCR will be expanding."

He noted, "Because of the dangerousness of a call, it may require a police response. But when we arrive we may call BCR. It's sometimes not clear until we get there that it's a mental health call." He said repetitive calls for help are often sent to embedded social workers. "There is a facility at 1800 Chicago Avenue that is staffed by county social workers, and it is a place where we can voluntarily bring people."

Joni Hodne, assistant director for 911, said her agency was able to build the training program when the pilot project began and help the BCR team figure out the best training for them. "We went slowly because we had to teach how the first responder system works, talking on the radio and how to keep the public safe and our responders safe."

She said the 911 call takers are highly trained and received additional training through the Mental Health Foundation to strengthen their ability to take a call and determine who is best to send. "It's a job they do every day," she said. "They decide what is suitable and safe for the BCR team to go into." She said there are often more



Crisis Responders Amy Brueckner (left) and Dean Zoller pose on one of the two BCR vans. The vans do not use bright lights or sirens. Responders wear navy blue shirts or jackets with "Behavioral Crisis Response" printed on the back. Responders are not armed, and seek to calm the situation. They maintain kindness and respect. They help the person in crisis and provide resources for further support. (Photo by Terry Faust)

calls than they have vans or people to respond to from the BCR team, but the public needs a response. "So, we have to take calls and turn over to the MPD," she said.

"As the program continues to grow and people request BCR specifically, it is going to be more difficult," she continued. "We can't say we cannot provide service. We work very closely with Canopy and its team, with their training program to get out on the street and with mental health."

CALLS FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

Hodne said repeat callers are treated as first-time callers. "We do not want to put any past judgment on them, so we treat them with the same care and dispatch BCR every time."

Crouch-Dodson inserted that the vast majority of BCR calls are for advice or assistance; the second-most number of calls are regarding individuals who are gone by the time the van arrives. The third highest number of calls, according to him, are for individuals seeking voluntary transportation to places that will help them remain stable.

"Embedded social workers are being used as follow-up," said Candace Hanson, program director of BCR. "They have instructed us to call them after a crisis has been resolved, should additional help be needed. We consult as a team and strategize about what is available."

Hanson said the goals of the response may be to treat in place and to provide the least intrusive intervention. "Those goals may be at odds with each other, and we may need to lead the individual to a different safe location," she said.

A BCR call may be resolved in different ways, according to Hanson. "It can be emotional de-escalation, where we reduce the intensity of the situation. We can recycle education, giving community members information about mental health, connecting them to services and resources. We can make appointments, asking them where they might have gone before. Or we can guide folks, using their natural supports that are already intact. We can guide them through a panic attack."

The great success in working with the MPD was something BCR had not expected, but Hansen said their relationship has been very positive. "It's been very professional, and we have resolved (any issues) through conversation and collaboration," she said. "Working with 911 dispatch has also been a big success for the program." Hansen added that the Canopy BCR pilot program has gotten a very warm reception from the community. She said another positive is how much the BCR staff really love their work.

She admitted there are still challenges, with gaps remaining in the mental health system. But BCR is a work in progress. "Gathering information and data is particularly challenging," she noted. "When someone is in crisis, that individual is not always the best historian."

The BCR team is also hoping for a better relationship with Hennepin County.

"In building this, Hennepin County and Hennepin Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were at the table the whole time, about two years," director Smith said. "It goes back to a misconception that if we came into existence, they would be replaced. But there's enough work for everybody."

He said, "EMS takes exception that we have designed a model that does not require police, and they have not been able to shed that as part of their policy. They could help us by having those conversations at a higher level more consistently so everyone understands what BCR is."

'BEST JOB I COULD ASK FOR'

Hansen said the BCR is looking for participants who are flexible, safety-minded but not fearful, and have a passion for working with the community. They are trained in de-escalation, CPR, detoxification, communication with each other, safety measures in the field and how to work with radios and computers.

"We ask them how Canopy can help them find their own journey to wellness," Hanson said. "We set time aside after every shift to debrief. We give them opportunities to sit down with a supervisor after

TAKEAWAYS

311: There has been an increase in the volume of police reports and parking complaints being filed online

Traffic control:

The overnight parking team is responding to complaints city wide

911: All 911 staff are certified in Emergency Mental Health Dispatching (EMHD)

BCR:

- The BCR has diverted over 1,400 911 calls from MPD. Collaboration with MPD is going well.
- They have provided service to every neighborhood, ward, and precinct.
- Community members appreciate BCR's work and responders feel they are having a meaningful impact.
- Challenges include limited BCR capacity, limited options for connection to ongoing services, difficulty gathering feedback after BCR interactions.

NEXT STEPS

311: Continue offering unarmed reporting options to community

Traffic control:

Further evaluation of the pilot to include interviews with traffic agents, 911 staff, etc.

911: Evaluate EMHD training and determine best options for future trainings

BCR:

- Staff up BCR weekend shifts
- Continue working with IT and 911 to pull more nuance from available CAD data
- Evaluating additional pathways to get community members connected to ongoing services
- Create cost estimates to help determine what investment would be needed to expand BCR

WHAT TO EXPECT

Behavioral crisis responders arrive in vans with the Canopy Roots and City of Minneapolis logos printed on the side. The vans do not use bright lights or sirens. Responders wear navy blue shirts or jackets with "Behavioral Crisis Response" printed on the back.

Responders must meet state requirements for mental health professionals or practitioners. They are:

- Culturally responsive
- Trained to de-escalate
- Experienced in helping people with trauma
- Respectful to race and gender identity

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Seems to be a behavioral or mental health crisis
2. No weapon involved
3. No physical violence has occurred/is occurring
4. No medical emergency
5. Drugs/alcohol are not escalating the situation
6. Police request (must still meet criteria 1)

a tough call. And after a really tough call, we don't have them jump into another one."

Two responders gave their own feelings about the Canopy Roots project.

"Being able to come to the scene and have a recipient not trust who we are, but slowly see the wall start to fall is the highlight of being a responder," one worker said.

"I had been waiting for something like this," said another. "It's the best job I could ever ask for. Every day is a good day to go to work."

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Senate D. 62 primary: Fateh and Laden face off

By CAM GORDON

The Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) Senate District 62 primary race between first-term incumbent Omar Fateh and union leader Shaun Laden is heating up as Fateh is facing questions about past campaign practices.

The election will take place with Fateh under scrutiny from voters, reporters, legislators, and the courts related to campaign and ethics complaints. He is under investigation for two possible ethics violations, initiated on May 22 by seven members of the Minnesota Senate Republican Caucus. Their complaint asks the ethics committee to "examine the report that Senator Fateh received an in-kind contribution of a campaign advertisement from a commercial entity, and then in response carried legislation that would have benefited that commercial entity. Also, it looks at "the extent of Senator Fateh's involvement" "in a case of election fraud" that involved Muse Mohamed, his brother-in-law, who was recently found guilty of lying to a federal grand jury during the testimony he gave in October 2021 related to his work as a Fateh campaign volunteer.

The first two senate subcommittee hearings into the complaints were held June 3 and 15. Fateh has a lawyer representing him at the hearings and has denied violating senate ethical standards. Testifying before the subcommittee about election propriety, Fateh said, "I did not directly or indirectly encourage anybody to act improperly at any point whether its voting or absentee ballots or any part of the election process." After the hearing, the subcommittee voted to continue the investigation and announced plans to subpoena two witnesses and to reconvene on July 7. There they hope to take testimony from Syad Salad, president of the Somali TV, and Dawson Kimyon, Fateh's former legislative aide and 2020 campaign manager.

Fateh (who did not respond to requests for an interview) was first elected to the senate in 2020 after defeating the incumbent, Jeff Hayden, in the DFL primary. In the senate, he sits on the Human

Services Reform, Human Services Licensing, State Government & Elections, and Technology & Reform Committees. He is also a member of the Council of Minnesotans of African Heritage.

He is noted on the legislative website as the first Somali American and the first Muslim to serve in the Minnesota Senate. He was an unsuccessful candidate for District 62A of the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2018 and for Fairfax County School Board (Virginia) in 2015. He was born in Washington, D.C. and attended George Mason University where he earned a master's degree in public administration. Since moving to Minnesota he has worked for the city of Minneapolis as a community specialist, Minnesota Department of Transportation and Minnesota Department of Revenue. Since his 2018 run, Fateh has worked for the University of Minnesota as a business analyst. Fateh and his wife Kaltum currently rent an apartment in the Ventura Village neighborhood.

Laden has been a Minneapolis renter for over 20 years. He lives in Whittier with his wife, Cecilia, who is a teacher at Whittier School. Before living in Whittier, he lived in Logan Park, Stevens Square, and Marcy Holmes.

As the president of the education support professionals' chapter of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Union, Laden co-lead the recent strike that improved hourly school workers' pay, protections for educators of color, and support for students. After that campaign, he said, "I decided to run for Senate to fully fund our public schools and improve the lives of working class neighbors like I did as president of our majority women and people of color MFT ESP union."

Laden has worked on many campaigns, including for Paul Wellstone (2002), Keith Ellison (2006 and 2008), Karen Clark (2014 and 2016), the Minneapolis Ranked Choice Voting ballot initiative, and the Minneapolis Public School Levy Referendums (2016 and 2018).

His community experience includes work starting a community garden, opening and running the Uptown Farmer's



Omar Fateh



Shaun Laden

Market, and winning improved labor standards for a group of workers at the University of Minnesota.

"As a Campus Camp Wellstone trainer," he said, "I taught college students around the country about organizing for change and a people-centered politics." He is most proud of "leading our Education Support Professionals (ESP) union from one where fewer than half of ESP were union members, to today where over 80% are and we have achieved what one ESP called 'life-changing financial improvements for hourly workers.'"

According to Fateh's campaign website, "In his first legislative session, Fateh has made a name for himself as one of the most active and vocal members of the Senate minority caucus... Fateh has demonstrated leadership emblematic of our courageous community of Southsiders, and, in the process, he is sure to have ruffled the feathers of some very powerful opposition."

It is hard to know how the ethics probe and criticism of Fateh will impact the primary. Some prominent DFLers, including Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, are still supporting him. "As long as I've known Senator Fateh, he has been a tireless public servant and absolutely dedicated to his constituent," she said in a public statement endorsing him. "We need more people like Omar Fateh at the State Capitol."

Laden has also been endorsed by local DFL elected officials including Minneapolis School Board Member Kimberly Caprini and State Representative Sydney Jordan.

Cedar Riverside resident Kayseh Magan supported Fateh in the past but is now supporting Laden. "As a Somali-American, I was thrilled to support Omar Fateh's historic run for the Minnesota Senate in 2020," she said. "Fateh invited me to his campaign kick-off event and I donated to his campaign. However, I have been disappointed

in how Senator Fateh has addressed the recent scandals surrounding his campaign. Senator Fateh has been dishonest to DFL Senate leaders about his relationship to a man who was recently convicted of perjury, in a case relating to voter fraud in Senator Fateh's primary race in 2020."

Magan has been following the ethics complaints, and court case carefully, and is convinced that Fateh's campaign took advantage of Somali American voters. "Two individuals from the Somali community testified that they never authorized Fateh's brother-in-law and campaign volunteer to deliver absentee ballots for them," said Magan. "Senator Fateh has refused to speak to the media or to answer to his constituents about the voter fraud allegations." She added, "For these reasons, I can no longer support Senator Fateh."

"As an educator who has worked in the Minneapolis Public Schools for 11 years my top priority would be fully funding our schools," said Laden. "I will also prioritize police accountability and transforming public safety, building more public housing, and unrestricting Minnesota to ensure safe and accessible abortion care to all Minnesotans who seek it."

Fateh lists "fully funded public schools," as his first priority on his website, followed by housing, livable wages and worker dignity, climate change and environmental justice, civil rights, public safety and policing, and healthcare.

"This primary is a choice. Who do you want fighting for us in Saint Paul?" said Laden. "I am someone who has created real change to materially improve the lives of thousands of working class union members like paraprofessionals and food service workers, the majority of whom are women and people of color. I will be a tireless champion for working people in our district, and will take my experience creating real change in working people's lives to St. Paul to get things done for our neighborhood."

The primary election that will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 9 will determine which of the two candidates will be on the ballot in the November general election. Early voting in the primary goes from Friday, June 24 through Monday, Aug. 8.

CITY COORDINATOR >> from 1

ees, both women of color, who praised Johnston for her leadership, support and mentorship.

Most of the concerns raised by 23 people who spoke against Johnston's nomination echoed those that were outlined, along with a timeline, specific examples and a list of demands, in a document written by current and former staff that was circulated earlier in the week. It de-

scribed "building frustrations about ongoing harm caused to current and past City Coordinator Office (CCO) staff, particularly Black and Brown staff."

"This harm stems from a toxic, anti-Black work culture that has been perpetuated by past and current city coordinators, both interim and appointed, for several years," according to the document.

Johnston spoke following the hearing and answered questions from council members. When asked to respond directly

to the concerns and the issue of so many staff resigning, she said, "What I am hearing is that if the culture doesn't improve, we will continue to lose Black and Brown employees. That's what I've heard repeatedly today. So, we need to start that work to improve the culture and that's my commitment."

"I was going to vote yes on this appointment. I am no longer doing that," said Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez. "If we are going to push this

through, that is the system of White supremacy in action."

On June 16, council members Payne, Wonsley, Ellison, Chavez, and Chughtai voted no on the appointment, with the remaining eight council members voting yes. Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez said, "I want city staff to know, I hear you. I support you. I believe your stories, and I will be voting no on this today."

>> Read the full article online at www.LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

LCC Summer Events

JULY

- 9** Hennepin Co. Garden Tour
9am - 4pm Hennepin County
- 17** Community Conversation
3pm at LCC Office
- 23** River Clean Up
9am - 12:30pm at Mississippi River Gorge
- 28** Open House
11am to 8pm at LCC Office

AUGUST

- 2** National Night Out
5 - 9 pm Neighborhood-wide
- 13** East Lake St. Open Streets
11am - 4:30pm on Lake Street
- 20** River Clean Up
9am - 12:30pm at Mississippi River Gorge
- 21** Share the Park
2- 9pm at Longfellow Park

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What happened to my old polling place? Redistricting!

This is part of a series about the 2022 municipal elections by the League of Women Voters Minneapolis.



The Hennepin County Elections office has sent out postcards to registered voters. You may find that your voting district and polling place have changed. What's happened?

In 2022 many people are experiencing this change in their voting area. This process, redistricting, happens every 10 years as states, counties, and cities across the country adjust their political boundaries to fit new census numbers. Because the population of Minnesota has changed, the sizes and boundaries of congressional, state, and local districts need to change so that each has approximately the same number of people. That way the value of each vote stays equal.

In Minnesota the process starts with the legislature and governor. The political parties redraw maps for our eight congressional, state legislature, and metropolitan council districts. It can be tempting for parties to try to design these areas for their own particular advantage, sometimes resulting in weird shapes and unusual inclusions. This is called gerrymandering.

Our system in Minnesota is set up to avoid gerrymandering. Here, when the parties and the governor don't agree, as

has happened for the past 50 years, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appoints a redistricting panel to draw new boundaries. The panel completed its work in February.

With congressional and state legislative boundaries determined, local redistricting begins. Cities, county boards, and school districts set their own local boundaries. In Minneapolis our charter commission, with the help of an advisory group and input from the community, draws the maps for park board districts and the city's wards and precincts.

Groups charged with adjusting voting districts are subject to specific rules, such as creating districts that are convenient for voting and are approximately equal in population. They also should make sure that voters who belong to communities of color or Native American tribes are able to fairly elect their representatives.

When local maps are completed and approved by the Minneapolis City Council and the park board, notices of updated polling places will be sent to all registered voters. Thus, before the primary election, we will know if our district and precinct have changed and where we can vote. The process itself, with all of its approvals and bipartisan committees, ensures that our vote is equal to one in any other part of the state. It's good to know that we have as much clout as any other voter.

HENNEPIN COUNTY ATTORNEY AND

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF CANDIDATE FORUMS

A consortium of Hennepin County Leagues of Women Voters (Brooklyn Park/Osseo/Maple Grove, Crystal/New Hope/East Plymouth/Robbinsdale, Edina, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, Minnetonka/Eden Prairie/Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Wayzata/Plymouth) will co-host two candidate forums for the primary election. All candidates who filed for Hennepin County Attorney and Hennepin County Sheriff were invited. These events are free and open to the public. The forums will be live streamed at www.stlouispark.org, and will be available on YouTube and other sources after the event. The specific details for each forum are:

Hennepin County Attorney Forum

This forum will be held on Tuesday, June 28, at 7 p.m. at St. Louis Park City Hall, 5005 Minnetonka Boulevard. The candidates are Martha Holton Dimick, Jarvis Jones, Tad Jude, Mary Moriarty, Paul Ostrow, Saraswati Singh, and Ryan Winkler. Candidates will respond to questions on a wide variety of issues of concern to voters. League of Women Voters of Eastern Carver County member Laura Helmer will

moderate.

Hennepin County Sheriff Forum

This forum will be held on Wednesday, June 29, at 7 p.m. at St. Louis Park City Hall, 5005 Minnetonka Boulevard. The candidates are Joseph Banks, Jai Hanson, and Dawanna Witt. League of Women Voters of White Bear Lake Area member Mary Santi will moderate this event.

Voters attending the forum have two opportunities to submit questions to the candidates. Written questions will be accepted throughout the forum. The League also has an email for voters to submit questions in advance. That email address is vote@lwvmpls.org. Please indicate the name of the forum in questions submitted by email. By League of Women Voters policy, the identity of the person asking the question is confidential. Any questions submitted via email will remain confidential with all identifying information removed before the event.

Audience members will also have the opportunity to submit questions in writing at the event, in accordance with Forum Rules.

BRIEFS

LONGFELLOW AND SEWARD COLLABORATE

The city council has approved a \$15,000 contract with the Longfellow Community Council to provide administrative support and oversight of the Longfellow and Seward neighborhood organizations as part of the Neighborhoods 2020 Shared Resources and Collaborations Fund. According to the city staff report, Longfellow Community Council and Seward Neighborhood Group intend to explore ways to partner that may include sharing resources, staffing and administration, as well as identifying work to advance each neighborhood organizations' strategic goals and to ensure organizational sustainability, in the long term. The contract is for \$8,000 to be spent in 2022 and \$12,000 in 2023.

CITY FUNDS FOR 3RD PRECINCT SITE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

Ward 2 Council Member Robin Wonsley successfully amended the 2022 Mayor's Recommended American Rescue Plan budget proposal to allocate \$100,000 from human resources department to the city coordinator's office to contract for consulting services to establish a comprehensive engagement process to include stakeholders in the next steps and redevelopment of the Third Precinct site. According to the amendment this should include a community understanding and benefits agreement.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

Hennepin County is collecting unwanted household products including paint, chemicals, fluorescent bulbs, batteries and fuel that are typically not accepted in normal waste collection services. People can drop off materials between 9:00 a.m.

and 3:00 p.m. July 8 and 9, and Aug. 16 and 18 at South High School, 3131 19th Ave. S. Visit Hennepin County's household hazardous waste collection event webpage for a list of items to bring.

FIX IT CLINIC

People can get free help with repairing broken household items at a Hennepin County's Fix-It Clinic where volunteers offer free, guided assistance to fix small household appliances, clothing, electronics, mobile devices and more. Clinics are held on the second Saturday of every month from noon to 4 p.m., with the last items accepted at 3:30 p.m. The family friendly events are first come, first served. A Minneapolis Fix-it Clinic is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 13, at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, 5025 Knox Ave. S.

SASHA COTTON RESIGNS

Sasha Cotton, director of the Office of Violence Prevention, will be leaving her position with the city on July 15 to become the deputy director for the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Starting as the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator and later leading the Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) as its first director, over her eight years with the city, Cotton is credited building on the public health-based approach to community safety, implementing a Groups Violence Intervention program, and initiating the Minneapolis Strategic Outreach program. According to the press release announcing Cotton's departure, the city will use a competitive, national search process to secure the next director who could, under a proposed government restructuring plan, lead a new Neighborhood Safety Department under a yet to be formed Office of Community Safety.

~ Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon

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The Lamp Mender Lighting Inventory Reduction Sale: Fixtures, sconces, lamps, glass (keeping our space). 9911 Lyndale Ave S, Bloomington. Open 10am-4pm Sat, Sun, Tues, Wed, Thurs. Closed Mon & Fri. www.lampmender.com

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Longfellow/Seward Healthy Seniors has two part-time positions open, a Community Nurse position that requires an RN, and a Program (Administrative) Assistant position that requires good database, social media, website and technical skills. Contact maryalbrecht@LShealthyseniors.org for more information.

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