



We build Pride on the Southside

FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH

**June
2023**

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Cam's Corner



MPHA proposal addresses long-term public housing needs

BY CAM GORDON

The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) has released a new proposal that could secure long-term funding to preserve, improve and produce more public housing in Minneapolis.

On May 10, they made a formal request to the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) that would raise \$12 million a year to be dedicated exclusively to public housing. The estimated \$240 million would be used to repair and renovate its current high-rises, townhomes and other housing, as well as add up to 400 new units of public housing over the next 20 years.

According to Minnesota state law, the city can collect up to 0.0185% of the city's total estimated market value through a Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) tax levy. In 2023 that would have been up to \$12 million. Minneapolis has not used its HRA levy authority since 2009, while nearly 100 counties and cities in the state are using

See Cam, page 16



Medea melee in the peace movement

BY ED FELIEN

Kieran Knutson held onto the door to the meeting with Medea Benjamin, threatening to disrupt the meeting. Members of Vets for Peace stood behind the door blocking his entrance. Dave Bicking asked him to leave. At least six officers and an MPD sergeant showed up. Eventually, Knutson left.

According to Code Pink, the organization begun by Medea Benjamin, "The most aggressive protester, Kieran Knutson, was screaming at Medea Benjamin that she was a Putin apologist and then grabbed her cell phone while she was attempting to film the situation. She called on members of Veterans for Peace for help to retrieve the phone. One of the vets, a man in his 70s, came to assist and was pummeled to the ground by Knutson. Knutson's assault resulted in the veteran being taken to the emergency room with

a dislocated shoulder and a black eye.

According to Kristin Dooley, director of WAMM, "Longtime Minneapolis anti-war organizations Women Against Military Madness and Veterans for Peace Chapter 27 invited Medea Benjamin, co-author of 'War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict,' to speak at 4200 Cedar Ave. on Friday night, May 19.

"A small group of 12 to 15 protesters gathered at 5:30 p.m. in the blocked-off street in front of 4200 Cedar with signs and handouts opposing Medea's point of view.

"When Medea arrived, she chose to engage in conversation with the protesters, which has been her practice at previous events. At that point one protester moved from the street onto the sidewalk and shouted repeatedly at Medea. As she stood silently filming him, he grabbed Medea's phone and put it in his back pocket.

"One of the hosts, an elder veteran, attempted to retrieve the phone and fell to the ground in the street. The elder was then attacked by two younger male protesters who punched him in the face and ribs repeatedly. Medea retrieved her phone and went inside. Other hosts were able to end the assault and assist the elder, who was taken to the emergency room for treatment and will need surgery to recover. An elder female was elbowed to the ground by a male protester as she tried to grab his hand. At least two people attending the event called 911 independently.

"A small group of the protesters then moved onto the entry sidewalk at 4200 Cedar and spent the next half hour shouting loudly at the hosts and demanded to be let into the building. The hosts stood quietly at the door allowing people to enter the building. Dave Bicking, owner of the building, informed

See Medea, page 8

DFL conventions – Ward 12 and Ward 10

BY DEBRA KEEFER RAMAGE

I am a member of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and I have been since 1986. In DSA, we like to debate something called the Dirty Break. This is premised on the decades of tension between the Democratic Party and the left outsiders, with the leftists within the party being the battle line. Within DSA, which is not a party, there is no ideological "discipline." There are Minnesota DSA folks who will have nothing to do with the DFL, there are those who like the idea of destroying it and building a socialist party on its smoking foundations, and there are those who work, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and loyalty, with and within the DFL. The Dirty Break is shorthand for "stop pissing around and leave the DFL."

I am also a member of the Democratic Socialist Caucus. This group is not affiliated with either DSA or the DFL Party. It is an independent PAC of DFL members and activists who believe democratic socialism is the most viable future of the party. I honestly feel like that's pretty utopian, put that way, but in practical terms, for me and other members of DSC, it means we agree to organize only within the DFL and to give it, for now, loyalty and a heck of a lot of



Ward 10 DFL convention (Photo/Twitter Wedge-Live)

volunteer hours. And money, of course. My feelings about the Dirty Break? It might happen, it might even be for the best, but I don't consider it to be a valid strategy.

I attended the in-person Ward 12 DFL convention as a delegate from an in-person precinct caucus. The convention was on Saturday, April 29, at Roosevelt High School, and I was late. When I found my precinct and secured an aisle seat, they were in the process of debating "the minority report." Not the action film, but an actual report from the minority on the ward convention rules committee. I had been prepped for this, which is a good thing, because if I had had to listen closely I would have been out of luck. Acoustics were abysmal. Former State Rep. Jim Davnie was giving the report. A

See DFL, page 19



Celebrate Summer

Franklin Ave.
Pages 2, 3 & 4



Celebrate Summer

Nicollet Ave.
Pages 11, 12, 13 & 14



CELEBRATE THE STREETS!

Lake Street Pages 22-23



Celebrate summer on Franklin Avenue

BY DEBRA KEEFER RAMAGE

Seward Cafe is back! After a launch event in April, the Seward Cafe officially reopened, albeit with some changes, on May 16. Since the pandemic and the George Floyd uprising, the cafe has been closed although the collective owners and the building were not idle, at various times hosting the Seward

Free Store and, in the kitchen, Southside Food Share and Midori's Floating World (until Midori's acquired a new space on Lake Street last year). Currently, the cafe hours are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. seven days a week, and the menu is limited to coffee and tea. They continue to host and work with local mutual aid programs, fundraisers for radical causes and neighborhood

activists. Find out more at their newly updated website: www.sewardcafe.com.

Just west of the Seward Cafe is

the original University Avenue location of the restaurant, but it burned down during the unrest surrounding George Floyd's

tarian Ethiopian food, Soberfish with its choice of excellent sushi or well-executed Thai favorites, Maria's Café for break-

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Architect's rendering of the future Minneapolis American Indian Center

Franklin Avenue newcomer Bolé Express and Lounge, the second location for the popular Ethiopian restaurant in St. Paul's Como neighborhood. Three years ago, an earlier version of Bolé Express was just about to open at

murder. Now recently opened in Seward, Bolé Express serves fast-casual Ethiopian fare, focusing on quick service, authentic taste, and healthy options, including vegetarian and vegan menu items. It's located at 2111 E. Franklin Ave.

Other great places to eat are also found along Franklin Avenue. Among those I like to (sadly infrequently) frequent are She Royal Bar and Bistro with its delicious and affordable vege-

fast, and way over west on the corner of Nicollet and Franklin, NOLA-style seafood spot Cajun Boiling for takeout or delivery.

Did you know that there is a 50-plus-year-old housing co-operative on Franklin Avenue? Built in the late 1960s as a private rental development, the Franklin Housing Co-op at 2300 E. Franklin is part of the River-ton Community Housing organization, which operates zero-equity housing co-ops, some, like

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'Seeds' sculptor Finn Eirik Modahl meets Queen Sonja of Norway at Norway House in October of 2022

Franklin Avenue, with affordability options, and others for student housing. With housing in the desirable Seward neighborhood getting more expensive, this might be an option if you're afraid of getting priced out.

If you live on or near Franklin Avenue, you have a lot of choices for grocery shopping. Of course there is the Seward Co-op at 2823 E. Franklin, which is a favorite of mine since I'm a long-time member. If I need to save money, though, there is Aldi at 1311 E. Franklin Ave.

And just across the street from Aldi, if it happens to be a Thursday between June and October,



Delicious vegetarian fare from She Royal

there is the Four Sisters Farmers Market, one of the smallest and most interesting farmers' markets in the city. Four Sisters opened on Thursday, June 1, this year, and features foods from Dream of Wild Health (as well as other vendors), including some heritage varieties and herbs that you can't get at other markets. If you're not familiar with Dream of Wild Health, check them out at this site: dreamofwildhealth.org. The market is located in the parking lot of 1414 E. Franklin and runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. They take SNAP, Market Bucks and cash, and some vendors take

patronize the businesses that are there. Jack's Hardware and Farm Supply (and bicycle repair) is the current store occupying 2201 Franklin Ave., the original site, way back in the 1970s, of Seward Co-op, and most recently Welna II Hardware. Jack's Hardware has diversified a bit in its offerings. They have three new things since they opened a few years ago: bicycle repair services and bike parts and accessories; a handyman service that includes locksmith services, as well as painting, plumbing and the usual handyman stuff; and, only for the over-21 crowd, THC beverages. Yes, it is a rather unusual offering for a hardware store, but the drinks cooler was already sitting right there, so why not? It appears to be a popular line. They also have lots of garden supplies, including hay bales, soil, starter plants, etc. Don't drive out to the suburbs! Keep your local shops in busi-



Chef Judah Nataf in the Soup for You! Cafe kitchen

ness! Two venerable institutions on Franklin Avenue have renovation news. For Norway House, the news is that their renovation – an expansion in fact – was

completed in the fall of 2022 and celebrated with a Grand Opening and Block Party on Oct. 15. In attendance were Queen Sonja of Norway, many donors and

See Franklin, page 4



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Franklin, from page 3

volunteers from Norway House, the Norwegian artist Finn Eirik Modahl (who produced the new stainless-steel sculpture “Seeds”), members of the neighboring Norwegian language church, and hundreds of other neighbors and fans of Norway House. The project, which included building a new annex, the 18,000 square-foot Innovation and Culture Center, was undertaken in order to upgrade Norway House into a welcoming and inclusive representative and repository of modern Norwegian culture here in Minnesota.

The other hot spot on Franklin Avenue is just beginning renovations this year. This is the Minneapolis American Indian Center or MAIC. After many years of planning, they broke ground on an ambitious (\$32.5 million) construction project last December. In addition to upgrading systems and designs in the nearly 50-year-old building, the project will add over 16,000 square feet of new space to the



Bethany Lutheran Church before its 2021 closure

complex.

The new design calls for an impressive entrance right on Franklin Avenue with ceremonial space, and also expands and moves the Gatherings Cafe up from the basement to face the avenue. There will be larger and more modern fitness space, office spaces, and a greatly expanded art gallery. The renovations are so extensive that the

building is closed for the duration and services and programs have been moved to nearby partner locations, such as the Little Earth Learning Center and the Many Rivers East Building. The first phase of construction is expected to be complete by summer of 2025.

Franklin Avenue houses some great community organizations, and three of them are in the former Bethany Lutheran Church building, an institution on Franklin Avenue since 1902. Bethany Lutheran closed as a church in September of 2021. In anticipation of the closing, they voted to give their then-101-year-old church building to Augsburg University. Read all about this part of the church history and its interesting beginnings in this piece in Southside Pride by Elaine Klaassen: southsidepride.com/2021/09/20/bethany-lutheran-church-closed-sept-12.

The current tenants in the former-church-cum-community-center are Soup For You! Cafe, a free lunch program started by the church eight years ago; CAIR, the Council on American Islamic Relations, which has had its offices in the building for years also; and Open Door Learning, an adult education center. I don’t know a lot about Open Door Learning, apart from the fact that they offer adult literacy, citizenship classes and college prep, all free. I have visited Soup For You! several times. They offer free hot lunches, with soup, sides and coffee, five days a week from noon to 1 p.m. in a cafe-style, full-service setting. Their soups are restaurant quality, I’m not kidding. All are welcome, and if you’re too rich to be visiting a soup kitchen, just be nice and drop a \$50 bill in the donation can.

What does Ninde mean?

Ninde means “my heart” in Ojibwe. Traditionally, Ojibwe moms used this as a term of affection for their baby. It is also a name of a group of people working to improve the health of Native babies in Minneapolis and St. Paul by working with Native moms.

What’s special about Ninde Doulas?

Ninde doulas are women who have received special training to learn how to support other Native women while they are pregnant, when they are giving birth, and after a baby has been born. In addition, they have learned teachings about traditional Native birth practices from elders.

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Ninde Doulas

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East Phillips wins one of the biggest environmental justice victories in Minnesota history

BY DANIEL COLTEN SCHMIDT

The East Phillips Neighborhood Institute (EPNI) has reached an historic deal with the city of Minneapolis to purchase the entire 7.6-acre Roof Depot site for \$3.7 million. Through a decade of fierce organizing, East Phillips residents and their allies have protected their community from yet another disaster of environmental racism. For generations, East Phillips has been a leader in the defense of human rights and environmental justice. Now, they are at the center of the equitable, green-economy revolution.

The historic significance of this victory has its roots in the first contact between the original inhabitants of this land – primarily Dakota, Ojibwe, Anishinaabe, Ho Chunk, and Sac and Fox Native people – and the United States government in 1805. Over the last two centuries in Minnesota, Indigenous sovereignty, philosophy, humanity and existence have been under assault. The Indigenous community is at the center of the Roof Depot defense campaign because the Little Earth community – the only Native-preference Section 8 housing in the United States – is only two blocks away from the Roof Depot site. Environmental racism in East Phillips has been called a “slow genocide” by Native folks who too often bury children due to health conditions caused by pollution. At an EPNI rally, an Indigenous elder said, “Could our ancestors ever have imagined that we would be fighting for poisoned land?”

The deal that EPNI was able to strike with the city of Minneapolis

only came as a result of protests, court litigation, and the decentralized movement building that was sustained with the support of thousands of community members. Much of the vitality for intervention at the state Legislature came from Rep. Samantha Sencer-Mura, who said that saving the Roof Depot was “by far the issue she heard most about” from her constituents in the 2023 legislative session.

EPNI found its opportunity when, in April, the Minneapolis Public Works director, Margaret Anderson Kelliher, revealed that the city would be willing to sell the Roof Depot site if the state would commit to fully funding the city’s roughly \$200 million state appropriations requests. The city used East Phillips residents’ plea for environmental justice as a bargaining tool to guarantee their huge funding requests.

The city is walking away from the deal with full pockets. They demanded that the money which they had already spent on the Hiawatha expansion project out of the waterworks fund, currently estimated to be \$16.7 million, be fully repaid in order to sell the Roof Depot property. This astronomical price is totally out of reach for the East Phillips community, which is one of the lowest-income neighborhoods in the city. It also reflects a likely mismanagement of tax dollars since the city bought the site for \$6.8 million, the building has not been maintained for 10 years, and no third-party appraisal of the property nor audit of the Hiawatha expansion project has ever occurred.

The Minnesota Legislature

has agreed to appropriate at least \$12.2 million directly to the city over two legislative sessions for the purpose of refilling the waterworks fund. EPNI must pay the city \$3.7 million no later than July 15, 2024, at which point ownership of the Roof Depot site will be transferred to EPNI. Any additional money necessary to fully replenish the waterworks fund will be the responsibility of the state.

As part of the deal, EPNI must show financial capability by Sept. 7, 2023, with either \$3.7 million cash in hand, or a letter of credit from a bank, or person-

al guarantees from investors. EPNI will be granted access to the property in the near future to complete due diligence reports, including environmental and architectural assessments. EPNI is currently developing the Community Ownership Model that will provide the legal and community structure responsible for the Roof Depot project.

The East Phillips vision for a cooperatively owned indoor urban farm, solar energy hub, low-income housing complex, community gathering space and business incubator will have a massive strengthening effect for

Native rights and will support the health of all the diverse cultures and people who reside in the East Phillips neighborhood. East Phillips is an epicenter of economic and environmental justice because the people have known for hundreds of years about the destructive nature of the extractive and industrial economic model. The agreement between EPNI and Minneapolis is a victorious milestone in the long journey of repairing past harms of environmental racism and colonialism.



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We owe a lot to Ronnie Cummins (1946-2023)

From the obituary published in the Star Tribune:

Ronnie Cummins “was a leading figure in the global organic regenerative food and farming movement. His enthusiastic organizing skills were infused with passion, warmth, courage and tenacity. He was tireless in his work for justice and peace. Ronnie was the co-founder and International Director of the Organic Consumers Association, (OCA) and its international affiliates, Regeneration International and Vía Orgánica. He had a passion for educating young people, and headed up the creation of Vía Orgánica, an agroecology farm school and research center in Central Mexico.”





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Gummies and seltzers and mushrooms, oh my! Plus, Brazilian pizza at ESC

BY DEBRA KEEFER RAMAGE

Openings and closings

Several local favorite restaurants have changed hours recently. In April, Tiny Diner reopened for all-day service, including dinner. They're now open from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. every day and the patio is rock-

ing and all of their recipes.

Kehm Rai, 23, who emigrated here from Nepal nine years ago, already has had a rich life as a famous YouTube gamer, but he wanted to do something more difficult and of use to his community. So he got together some partners to purchase the site of longtime "trouble spot" the Lamplighter Lounge in St.

available at Hi Flora! on 26th Street just west of Lyndale.

One big fast-food workers' union!

The fact that the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is both the fastest growing and possibly now the largest private sector union in the U.S. and Canada says a lot about the changing labor landscape in these two wealthy countries. And its explosive growth since 2020 says a lot about the changing consciousness of labor and the working class. Now, SEIU's ambitious plan is to organize geographically in the fast-food industry. It's the old slogan "One Big Union" finally come to life. Read this deep interview with Mary Kay Henry, from the left

ites: Sonny's on Lyndale was noted for its pinot grigio sorbet, while Pumphouse Creamery and Sweet Science are two local brands that use only fair trade (i.e., slavery-free) chocolate in their recipes.

Eater also ran a snarky piece in May called "Everybody Please Shut Up About Ramps." Just to be contrary, here are links to two articles about ramps, which I recently tried cooking for the first time after reading that article. From Bon Appetit, "What Are Ramps and Why Is Everyone, Like, Obsessed With Them?" bonappetit.com/test-kitchen/common-mistakes/article/common-mistakes-ramps and from Real Simple, six cool recipes in realsimple.com/food-recipes/recipe-collections-favorites/popular-ingredients/ramps.



Hi Flora!'s limited but posh seating

are, but it was good. We also visited the onsite liquor store. The shop centers local and BIPOC producers and manages to get a lot of variety into its tiny space. I had a special Brazilian pizza from Ouro Pizzaria that was a tribute to Mexico due to it being around Cinco de Mayo when we visited. I loved it! It was topped with an elote-like mixture of corn kernels, herbs and chilis, and queso fresco. I adored the rich-tasting, chewy crust, which was a golden saffron color, but the reason for the coloring and the entire recipe are a family secret.



Kehm Rai in his new Nepali-Karen grocery store in St. Paul

ing. Modern Times recently shortened their hours a bit and are now open from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. daily.

A new iteration of Keefer Court, the beloved Chinese bakery and takeout place formerly on the West Bank, will be opening soon at Asia Mall in Eden Prairie. This was a momentous closing last year, causing much regret. The new spot is helmed

Paul with the plan to start up a new and different grocery store. Their project, Karen and Nepali Foods on Rice Street, opened May 13. See Sahan Journal (sahanjournal.com) for details.

New certification doesn't mince words

On my visit to one of my reviewed eateries below, Hi Flora!'s market annex (which opened a few months before the cafe will), I discovered a new ally in a passionate struggle of mine: the quixotic (and it surely should not be!) fight to end child slavery in the chocolate supply chain. (See my first public writing on this topic at southsidepride.com/2019/01/21/do-you-want-slavery-with-that-chocolate/) Previously, when people asked me how to tell if a chocolate was free of the moral taint of slavery, my answer was long and complicated. If this new wave of activism catches on, that may no longer be the case. A new certification was launched by a group with the uncompromising name of slave-freechocolate.org. Check it out, and try the Up Up chocolate,



Slave-free chocolate label

by Michael Bui, owner of Pho Mai, with locations both at Asia Mall and in Dinkytown. A longtime fan of Keefer Court, Bui shared his plans with founder Sunny Kwan and daughter Michelle, who gave him their bless-



Mary Kay Henry of SEIU on the picket line with striking workers

news service Portside: portside.org/2023-05-02/how-biggest-private-sector-union-wants-transform-restaurant-workforce.

Various food tidbits

A May article in Eater Twin Cities, "Where to Eat Ice Cream

Eat Street Crossing – Ouro Pizzaria, cocktails, and valet parking

I talked my neighbor and friend Julie into a visit to Eat Street Crossing. Being in her car, we were able to use the valet parking. It works well, but the cost has gone up to \$8. Worth



Ouro pizza with its mysterious golden crust

in the Twin Cities," started out with a Dairy Queen! I'm not a fan, but I was happy to learn that the Lexington Avenue Roseville DQ dates from 1947 and still has its vintage neon sign. It finished with my three personal favor-

it, in my opinion. We visited the bar first. I had an old-fashioned, which was very modern. Here's the recipe: Japanese whisky + bourbon + soju + piloncillo + sansho + bitters. I don't even know what half of those things



Take-home haul from Hi Flora!

Hi Flora! preview – a brave new world of mushrooms, weed and vegan tacos

On May 13, I visited Hi Flora!'s storefront. They have a dizzying array of products featuring herbs and magic mushrooms like reishi and lion's mane and euphoric tinctures and drinks containing THC. They have a short but exciting menu of brunch foods, all vegan. I had a street taco made with Nixta tortillas. It was OK, but honestly I don't remember what was in it. I also had a fancy drink from their cooler full of fancy drinks, but not a THC one, because I was driving. I bought a few of their fancy wares to take home (see photo).



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After 130 years, Elsen Brothers auto shop says goodbye

BY STEPHANIE FOX

In 1891, 17 years before Richfield officially became a city, John Elsen bought a small property at 7730 Portland Ave. and soon opened a blacksmith shop. He did not imagine that in 2023, his shop would become the city's longest continuing operating business. And during those 130 years the shop changed often, sometimes radically, always keeping up with the times.

More than 30 years after opening his blacksmith business, with the rise of the age of the automobile and the diminished need for blacksmiths, Elsen transformed his shop. By 1929, more than a quarter of American families owned a gasoline-powered vehicle and Elsen Pure Oil gas station and auto repair shop was already serving the growing need for auto repair and fuel.

The station passed from John to his son Eugene, then to grandsons Rich and Don Elsen. But on April 14, current owners Bob

and Joe Elsen, the great-grandsons of the shop's founder, were forced to close after 130 years in business, after learning of the state of Minnesota's plans to bulldoze the shop in order to widen Interstate Highway 494. When the shop's sign announced the closing, longtime customers began coming in to say goodbye.

Bob Elsen has been working at the shop since high school. His brother Joe joined him shortly after that. "They trusted us to keep the business going," Joe said of his family, "and we did due to being honest and fair with our customers." Their attention to customers and their cars won them several "Best Repair Shop" awards.

Bob has been semi-retired for several years and enjoys doing volunteer work and playing golf. Joe's retirement plans are, he said, nothing special. "I'll work on projects and spend some time traveling." But, Joe said, "I'm going to miss our customers. They've been coming in lately, bringing us doughnuts and

cookies. I'm going to miss seeing them all. I'd really like to thank everyone – the customers, the suppliers, our vendors and our employees over the years."

Over those years, Bob and Joe began by pumping gas, cleaning windshields and checking oil levels when customers filled up their cars.

"I started out as a kid, working the night shift after school. We were open seven days a week," Bob said. Joe, too, worked during his high school years starting 50 years ago and has been a part owner for 30 years.

The 1973 gas crisis brought more changes. The station shortened its hours and then closed on Saturdays. Many car companies radically changed their technology as a response to the 1970s and the gas crisis. "There's a world of difference in cars from the 1960s and 1970s. Back then you had emission systems with carburetors. Now, you have electric ignitions and fuel injection. Back then, 40 years ago, when it got cold, it was

harder to start your cars. Now, they start right up."

In the 1980s, new EPA regulations to protect soil from gasoline pollution became too expensive for the small shop. While it was the longest running Pure Oil (which became Union 76) station in the country, there was a lot of concern about contaminated soil, so the pumps and tanks were removed, and the shop focused solely on vehicle engine repair.

"I always liked the mechanic part. Working on cars is more fun than working on business books," said Bob.

The repair shop has also seen other changes. There have been many new customers during the last few years, with new people moving to Richfield. "Five years ago, I could put a name on every face that came in. Now, that has changed. And we used to work mostly on American made cars. Now, there are mostly Asian cars."

Bob's son Brian, the fifth generation to work at the family

business, is now preparing to find a new job as an auto technician. "I've been doing this since I was 19 years old," Brian said. "I've got options but I'm a little sad. I've been able to work with my family for 25 years. This will be a big change. It's a bummer to see a family name that has been around for 130 years go away."

Two days before closing, a handwritten sign taped up near the cash register said it all: "Closing Forever on April 14th."

The shop is now closed. The family sold all their equipment at auction. Workers there, including Brian Elsen, have already found work at other shops. Plans are that the building, along with several others nearby, will be demolished. According to the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the timing for the building removal has not been finalized but will likely happen sometime during the 2023 construction season. Work on the Portland Avenue bridge will take place in 2025.

The Building Formerly Known As Walker Church

BY DEBRA KEEFER RAMAGE

Walker Community United Methodist Church has always done things differently. For much of the last 50 years, Walker Church has incubated dozens of radical, secular projects. And some of the renter organizations were not what you would expect in a small-to-medium neighborhood church. In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre and KFAI "Fresh Air" radio (back then one of the few independent listener-supported stations) were two organizations among many that were founded in a tiny basement office or attic studio of the "Old Walker." Some of the organizations didn't last forever, though: the south Minneapolis chapter of the Black Panthers, draft counseling during the Vietnam War, a celebrated and fondly remembered lesbian theater troupe. There was a left-leaning coalition of four south Minneapolis Methodist churches in the 1980s and early 1990s. Walker is the only one of the four still standing.

So no one should be all that surprised at what Walker Church is doing next. We are giving our church building – the "New Walker," lovingly designed and financed by the 2012-13 congregation and valued at around \$4 million – to another, younger church. These things happen,

but it's usually after the congregation has ceased to exist, or at least to function. Churches across the country are dying at the rate of several a week, and sometimes these buildings are given to a newer, healthier one. (See this article from The Atlantic: theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/what-should-america-do-its-empty-church-buildings/576592.) But Walker is neither dead nor dying. Despite declining numbers, we are maintaining a part-time pastor, having regular weekly hybrid celebrations, giving away tons of healthy food every week, and even occasionally welcoming new – and young – members. But I should back up a bit to tell the whole story. Or at least, the story since 2020.

The pandemic of 2020 and the George Floyd uprising may have been very traumatic for Walker Church, as for many churches, but it was not our first rodeo. I have been associated with Walker Church since 1985, and in that time, it has had more trauma than a single group of people deserves to have. Among the catastrophic events buffeting our church were the deaths in office, in their early 50s, of two beloved pastors, in 1989 and again in 2005. And then there was the fire. On the eve of Memorial Day in 2012, the "Old Walker" at age 102 was struck by lightning and

burned down to 10 feet below ground, destroying everything but a chest of worship items, the cornerstone and a few bricks and, miraculously, a nylon rainbow flag left dangling from the ruins of the northeast tower.

After intense mourning and agonizing debate, the congregation chose to rebuild on the same site. That was how we got the "New Walker," which debuted in December of 2013. A big item on Pastor Walter Lockhart's wish list was a commercial-grade kitchen to use in hosting a weekly free meal for the community, and we got that, along with a fireplace built of bricks from the old church, and a concert-quality acoustic design for the sanctuary. It looks more like a theater than a church, and that was completely intended.

There were six good years with Pastor Walter until his retirement, with a full upstairs dining room every Tuesday night for free food and groceries. The mostly leftist organizations that had been tenants at Walker before the fire had moved into 4200 Cedar, which had just opened around that time, but new Walker tenants came in, the usual mix of radical caring, recovery, youth programs and food sharing. Pastor Walter retired in 2019, and was replaced by the young Rev. Katy Lee, who sadly had to leave some time after the

pandemic due to illness. Walker persevered without a pastor until finally Rev. David Wheeler (retired) was appointed as interim pastor. (On July 1 he will begin as our regular part-time pastor on year-to-year assignments.)

Meanwhile, backing up again, another transformational thing occurred in 2017 when "church planter" Rev. Tyler Sit de-

See *Walker*, page 19



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The left’s confusion harms the Ukrainian people

BY KIERAN F. KNUTSON,
PRESIDENT OF CWA LOCAL
7250

On May 19 Medea Benjamin, the famous peace activist/celebrity, brought her book tour to south Minneapolis – and a modest protest of veterans, peace activists, Native Rights defenders and anarchists met her outside. Why would anyone be protesting a famous peace activist? The answer is that Benjamin has become the most prominent supporter of Putin’s line on Ukraine among the U.S. left (there are bigger names on the right).

Her book repeats many of the Russian regime’s lies and distortions about Ukraine – that Ukraine has always been part of Russia (yeah, under an oppressive empire, so what?), that Crimea is even more a part of Russia (even though Crimeans voted in the majority for an independent Ukraine in 1991), that the Maidan Revolution was a fascist coup (it was in fact a broad-based popular uprising that overthrew the government and was ultimately supported by the Parliament). NATO expansion drove the war (Ukraine was never in NATO, and is still not guaranteed admission to NATO, which has been extremely hesitant to allow Ukraine to join), Ukrainian fascism is predominant (the far-right parties are not in Parliament and get about 2% of the vote, much less than in just about every other European country, and Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly for a Jewish president in 2019).

Left unsaid are Putin’s deeply racist, sexist and straight-up imperialist reasons that he himself has given for his “special operation,” including asserting that Ukrainians have never been a

real separate people (the same slur as is used against Palestinians and Kurds), railing against Lenin for the supposed Bolshevik “creation” of Ukrainian nationalism, and that a free Ukraine is a threat to traditional family and gender roles. Neither is the prominent role of the far-right Russian mercenary company, the Wagner Group, in the invasion and occupation of Ukraine mentioned.

Ultimately, Medea Benjamin is pushing for an arms embargo on Ukraine and for the U.S. to force Ukraine to capitulate to Russia’s demands, at a minimum for land and veto power over Ukrainian society and politics. This line has put her in bed with a number of longstanding war criminals of the “realist” school of U.S. statecraft, like Henry Kissinger, but also with right-wing figures like Tucker Carlson, Marjorie Taylor Greene and, of course, Trump (who she praises and re-tweets). Her February “Rage Against the War” rally in Washington D.C. was co-organized with right-wing libertarians and drew out Putin sympathizers with their prominent “Z” Russian military invasion symbols, and neo-Nazis like Matthew Heimbach and his crew. This is an ugly look for a so-called peace movement – fronting for a bloody invasion and allied with some of the worst people on the planet.

What should the position of anti-war activists and progressive people be?

A just position must start with the people left out by Benjamin – the Ukrainian people. Listen to the Ukrainian people – the Ukrainian trade unions, the Ukrainian feminists, the Ukrainian LGBTQ movement,

the Ukrainian student movement, the Ukrainian anti-fascist movement, the Ukrainian national minorities: the indigenous Crimean Tatars and other Muslims, Ukrainian Jews, Ukrainian-Roma – all of whom are overwhelmingly, nearly universally, supporting and participating in the resistance to the Russian invasion. Their voices are not hard to find – I’ll list some of my go-to English language sites below.

1. We should speak out against the Russian invasion and defend Ukrainian self-determination without strings attached.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for their lives and their freedom against a right-wing repressive regime. Their victory will be a victory for all oppressed people, especially those most threatened by Putin – the Chechens, Belarusians, Kazakhs, and the Russian people. Ukrainians have every right to get arms from wherever they can. There is a huge difference between wars of occupation and domination and wars of resistance. Aid to Ukraine should be with no strings attached. When Biden finally agreed to give Ukraine the advanced defensive Patriot missiles, the next week in what looked like a quid pro quo down payment, Zelensky signed an agreement for BlackRock, the huge American multinational investment firm, to run Ukraine’s re-construction.

Our union Local passed a resolution in support of the Ukrainian resistance: Solidarity with Ukrainian Resistance! Russian Troops Out Now! [https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/2-uncategorised/185-cwa-7250-e-board-solidarity-with-ukrainian-resistance-russian-](https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/2-uncategorised/185-cwa-7250-e-board-solidarity-with-ukrainian-resistance-russian-troops-out-now)

[troops-out-now](https://www.cwa7250.org/index.php/2-uncategorised/185-cwa-7250-e-board-solidarity-with-ukrainian-resistance-russian-troops-out-now)

2. Connect the Russian war with similar examples of aggression and occupation.

The hypocrisy of the U.S. establishment which cheers on Ukraine while lying about or hiding the atrocities against the Palestinian people can’t go unchecked. But a “whataboutism” that disses the Ukrainian people and their resistance is not an effective tool of explanation. Instead we should argue that what Putin is doing is a horrible crime and that it was made more possible by the U.S.’s brazen illegal invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the continuing illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. We must demand an end to the hypocrisy and avoid a politics of “campism” (supporting one or another nuclear armed power as a lesser evil).

3. Support the anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist, feminist and working-class forces in the Ukrainian resistance and the Russian underground.

The Ukrainian resistance includes many different trends and forces – we should support those that are most serious about fighting for a new, freer, and more egalitarian world. The anti-authoritarian Solidarity Collectives is a clearinghouse for information and material aid to anti-fascist fighters, trade unions and frontline civilian communities. Sotsyalnyi Rukh (“Social Movement”) is a Ukrainian democratic socialist group that has exposed and campaigned against Zelensky’s neo-liberal anti-labor reforms while also supporting the resistance to the Russian invasion. The Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group documents and protests the horrendous viola-

tions of human rights under Russian occupation (they’ve done a particularly heroic job of documenting the repression against the indigenous Muslim Tatar people in occupied Crimea), as well as fighting for the rights of Ukrainians, such as the now-established annual Pride Parade in Kyiv. There are many trade unions, grassroots organizations and radical collectives that could use our support – don’t assume Biden is helping them.

Resources:

Kyiv Independent - Independent media founded by journalists who left the Kyiv Post en masse after interference by the oligarch that owned that outlet: <https://kyivindependent.com/>

Commons (Ukrainian left-wing journal): <https://commons.com.ua/en/>

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group: <https://khp.org/en/>

Solidarity Collectives: <https://twitter.com/SolidarityColl1>

Social Movement: <https://twitter.com/SocRuch>

Ukrainian Trade Unions:

Confederation of Free Trade Unions: <https://twitter.com/CFTUU>

Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine: <https://www.fpsu.org.ua/index.php?lang=ens>

Independent trade union Zakhyst Pratsi (Defense of Labor): <http://tradeunion.org.ua/category/english/>

Medea, from page 1

the shouters that they would not be allowed in.

“The police arrived and stood near the shouting protesters. At about 6:45 p.m. the protesters left the entry sidewalk and either left the event or went back into the street. Dave Bicking neither called the police nor encouraged them to act once they arrived.

“At 7:00 p.m. Medea’s event began with 55 attendees and was undisturbed. At least two known protesters of Medea’s position attended the meeting, one of whom engaged in discussion with her.”



In her talk, Medea Benjamin said the Russian invasion of Ukraine was “illegal and immoral” and “must be condemned.” But she also said the “NATO aggressive alliance has moved right up to Russia’s border” and “we keep arming Ukraine, to what end?”

We asked Medea Benjamin, “To initiate a ceasefire and bring an end to the war in Ukraine, would you support a proposal that the U.S. and Poland should agree to dismantle MIM-104 Patriot air defense systems installed in 2004, and Russia should agree to withdraw from the Donbas and Crimea. The Donbas must become part of Ukraine, and Crimea must become an independent and neutral country with an international free port.”

She responded, “The U.S. is not interested in genuine peace. There would be too much blowback for Biden in an election year. It would be politically impossible.”



Medea Benjamin

How we got here, Part Two

BY RICHARD TAYLOR

NATO’s existence became justified by the need to manage threats provoked by its enlargement.
—Historian Richard Sakwa

As Americans, we must ask: Did U.S. policy inflame the crisis that led Russia to invade Ukraine? To answer, let’s examine key events in Europe from 1989 to 2022.

1989 promised to usher in a new era of peace and cooperation in Europe. After the Berlin Wall fell, Soviet President Gorbachev and President George H. W. Bush (B1) sought to overcome the Cold War. When B1 agreed not to move NATO “one inch to the east,” Gorbachev dismantled the Warsaw Pact and brought home Soviet troops.

B1 honored the agreement. President Bill Clinton did not. Disregarding the objections of the normally compliant Russian Federation (RF) President Boris Yeltsin, Clinton fulfilled a promise made to Polish voters in 1996 by bringing Poland and Hungary into NATO—not without objections from senior American statesmen such as George Kennan, the architect of the containment doctrine aimed at the USSR. In 1997 Kennan wrote that “expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era.” Nonetheless, Poland and Hungary were admitted.

The RF again objected when President George W. Bush (B2) added the Baltic states, Romania, and Bulgaria in 2004.

Tensions spiked in 2008 when B2 declared at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest that “Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO.” RF President Vladimir Putin denounced the move, insisting that

Moscow would never accept it. Privately, French President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel also opposed this move, telling B2 that Putin would see it as a declaration of war. They gave in when B2 wouldn’t budge.

Echoing Kennan’s warning, William Burns, ambassador to the RF in 2008 (and today’s head of the CIA), dashed off a memo to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. It read: “Ukraine’s entry into NATO is the brightest of red lines to all of the Russian elite, not just Putin. In more than two and a half years of conversation with key Russian players from knuckle draggers in the dark recesses of the Kremlin to Putin’s sharpest liberal critics, I am yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a threat to Russia’s interest. NATO would be seen as throwing down the strategic gauntlet. Today’s Russian will respond.” But B2 persisted.

In 2014, political upheaval in Ukraine spurred efforts to admit Ukraine to NATO. The Maidan uprising sent Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich packing, to be replaced by Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the American favorite. Alarmed by Kyiv’s embrace of Washington, Putin ordered his military to seize Crimea. At the same time, Ukraine’s military clashed with pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Tensions rose further in 2014 after NATO matched its words with deeds. With a pro-U.S. regime in Kyiv, Obama began shipping advanced weapons to Ukraine’s military. Equally threatening to Moscow, the U.S. started training 10,000 Ukrainian troops per year. Dismissing legalisms about Ukraine not yet being in NATO, Putin asserted that these moves showed that Ukraine had become a de facto member of the alliance.

He had company. After the invasion, a headline in the Wall Street Journal celebrated this de facto status. It read: “Secret of Ukraine’s Success: Years of NATO Training.” President Zelensky of Ukraine agreed, stating that, “We are a de facto member of NATO; we would like to be de jure.”

Let’s interrupt the chronology and mention two broader points. First, it’s no surprise that the entire spectrum of the Russian political class opposes NATO membership for Ukraine. Russians bitterly remember that twice in the 20th century, in World War I and World War II, Germany had invaded, devastated, plundered, and seized vast territory. In both cases, millions of people perished, with 27 million Soviet soldiers and civilians losing their lives in the struggle against the Nazis. In both cases German control over Ukraine served as a springboard for an assault on the Russian heartland.

Several experts on this topic have urged American officials to do a thought experiment where they imagine that twice in the 20th century Germany had made an alliance with Mexico, one that allowed Germany to invade the western half of the U.S., inflicting losses similar to those just mentioned. The experts concluded that the experiment might make U.S. policy makers more receptive to Russian security concerns.

Or they might dismiss—do dismiss—Russian concerns on the grounds that NATO is purely a defensive alliance. Not everyone agrees. Reviewing NATO’s record since 1991, Noam Chomsky concluded that NATO is “the most violent, aggressive military alliance in the world today.” He points to NATO’s aerial assault on the Bosnian Serbs in 1995, its bombing of Belgrade in 1999, its 20-year assault on

Afghanistan begun in 2001, its fracturing of Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011. In Moscow, NATO’s warlike deeds impressed more than its peaceful intentions.

And after Poland and Romania joined the alliance, the U.S. placed anti-missile radars and missiles in each country, allegedly to destroy missiles from Iran and North Korea. It wasn’t lost on the RF that this defensive posture disguised the fact that the launchers can be easily changed to carry offensive nuclear weapons.

Returning to the chronology, after Biden took office in January 2021, NATO’s actions reflected its aggressive reputation. Biden stepped up military exercises in the region. In July 2021, Washington and Kyiv sponsored Operation Sea Breeze, military exercises in the Black Sea aimed at Russia that included the navies of 32 countries. In September, Ukraine led Rapid Trident 21, an operation intended to increase “interoperability of weapons of allied and partnered nations.” Moscow also watched as NATO carried out live-fire rocket exercises in Estonia aimed at tracking the RF’s air defense radars.

Political moves accompanied this military activity. Zelensky, elected on a platform that included negotiations with Putin, copied Biden’s stance of no negotiations. In August 2021, the U.S. and Ukraine signed the Strategic Defense Framework, a bilateral agreement that accelerated massive shipments of weapons to Ukraine whether it was in NATO or not. Three months later the two countries signed the Charter on Strategic Partnership which reaffirmed the 2008 Bucharest Declaration asserting that Ukraine will become a member of NATO, this time through an expedited process.

Throughout 2021, Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov kept objecting. Putin reiterated the Russian position: 1. Ukraine couldn’t join NATO; 2. No offensive weapons could be placed near the Russian border; and 3. NATO should honor its agreement with Gorbachev and move its weapons back to Western Europe.

Almost plaintively, Putin decried the placement of weapons on “the doorsteps of our nation; we have no further place to retreat to.”

Lavrov focused on the pivotal point: “The key to everything is that NATO will not expand eastward.”

U.S. Secretary of State Tony Blinken repeated the American mantra: “There is no change. There will be no change.”

On February 23, 2022, Russia invaded, setting off the horrors that continue.

This chronicle of events is intended to explain, not excuse. International law rejects preventive war, so by invading Ukraine, the RF executed naked aggression, the “supreme international crime,” according to the U.N Charter. That makes the RF legally accountable for the pain, suffering, death and damage inflicted on Ukraine and its people.

However, as to the question posed at the top, the U.S. did connive to provoke the invasion, one that might have been avoided had Biden been willing to negotiate over Russian security concerns. None other than Pope Francis spoke for many when he said that NATO “had been barking at the gates of Russia” and had “either provoked or not prevented” the war.

This conclusion leads to two other topics worth exploring in future issues: Who are the winners and losers? What are the prospects for peace?

.....

Vets for Peace response

BY MIKE MADDEN,
VFP CHAPTER 27

Richard Taylor provides good background to the current proxy war being waged in Ukraine.

I would add a few important points to his chronology:

- The American role in overthrowing President Yanukovich was extensive. In addition to Sens. John McCain and Chris Murphy joining Ukrainian opposition leaders on a Kyiv stage, we saw U.S. State Department officials in Maidan Square handing out food and encouraging protestors. And no account of the U.S. role in that coup is complete without reference to the intercepted phone call between Ambassador Pyatt and Undersecretary Nuland. They were caught red-hand-

ed plotting who would succeed Yanukovich, and how his overthrow would be accomplished. Their plans came to fruition on Feb. 22, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV9J6sxCs5k>

- Less than two months later, on April 15, 2014, the unelected successor regime to Yanukovich launched a military attack on the breakaway provinces to reclaim them by force of arms. The BBC reported on Kyiv’s “anti-terror operation” one day later. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27035196>
- The Minsk II agreements of 2015, had they been successfully implemented, would have kept the Donbas as part of Ukraine, albeit as a semi-autonomous region.

Several years later, in 2022, Chancellor Angela Merkel revealed that, as a guarantor of the agreements, Germany was not sincere in their implementation, but rather sought to “give Ukraine time” with which to arm itself. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-loss-trust-west-will-make-future-ukraine-talks-harder-2022-12-09/>

So, the first use of military force, the initial act of armed aggression, was committed by Kyiv against its own citizens. The Russian invasion of Feb. 24, 2022, should also be condemned, not because it started a war, but rather because it was a disproportionate escalation of an eight-year conflict that had already claimed 14,000 lives. It

must be viewed in the context of extensive U.S. meddling that toppled Ukraine’s democracy, and subsequent negotiations in which Ukraine’s western backers saw war as the inevitable, if not the preferable, solution.

With regard to ending the war, I agree that an immediate ceasefire and negotiations are urgently needed. I believe talks should be moderated by a neutral third party. I also believe there is a competing U.N. principle to the often invoked “sovereignty of nations.” It is the principle of “self-determination of peoples.”

From 2014 through 2022, it was the people of the breakaway provinces who were the aggrieved party. It was their president who was violently deposed, their language that was banned, their culture and well-being that

were threatened. When they were militarily attacked by their own government, the sovereign lost any remaining claim to legitimacy. The breakaway provinces, in their various ways, exercised their right to remedial secession.

I see the annexation of Crimea as a relative success, retrieved from the instability and chaos instigated by the U.S.-backed coup. Prior to annexation, the people of Crimea overwhelmingly supported close ties with Russia. The period of annexation, February through March of 2014, was almost bloodless. Only six people were reported killed. Today, the people of Crimea remain happy with their status as part of the Russian Federation.

After nine years of war, the

See Vets, page 19

Structural racism in city's neighborhood funding programs

BY ROBERT THOMPSON

In 2011, the city of Minneapolis took control of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) in what many considered a hostile takeover. In 2019, the city declared that the NRP was an example of structural racism and continues to insist that NRP and neighborhood organizations only benefit white, affluent homeowners.

The NRP gained national and international recognition for its model program to support grassroots planning. Since 1993, neighborhood organizations were funded generously by the NRP in their efforts to improve communities. Between 1993 and 2018, the NRP Policy Board provided \$236 million to support 136 neighborhood action plans developed by residents and approved by the neighborhood organization, the NRP Policy Board, and the city and other jurisdictions.

Phillips neighborhoods were awarded more than \$20 million by NRP to implement projects such as the Green Institute, the Midtown Greenway, and the Franklin Theater and Heart of the Beast Theater restorations. The neighborhoods used NRP funds to support many innovative housing projects, such as Bii Di Gain Dash Anwebi Elder Housing, Midtown Exchange Apartments, and Greenway Heights, as well as creating

neighborhood-driven home loan and grant programs to help residents become homeowners and to fix and restore their homes.

So, how has the city performed since the takeover? An analysis of the city's management of neighborhood funding programs shows significant disinvestment in the most diverse and least-affluent neighborhoods by the city, and this disinvestment occurs at several levels.

Many past studies noted that the NRP allocations heavily favored the least affluent and most diverse neighborhoods of the city. Despite this, in 2019 the city declared that its funding programs were more equitable than NRP. This is not true. Annual allocations to neighborhoods such as Phillips and Near North fell as much as \$111 per household after the city takeover, compared to only \$31 per household for more affluent areas of the city such as Southwest or Calhoun-Isles.

Because of the generous funding of NRP, and because neighborhoods generated an additional \$40 million through wise planning, neighborhoods are still using NRP funds today. Since the city took control of the NRP purse strings, however, annual NRP expenditures have fallen significantly.

This decrease in the amount of checks actually being written each year is not impacting neighborhoods equally. Annual

expenditures fell far more sharply in the most diverse and least affluent neighborhoods, while actually increasing in the least diverse and most affluent neighborhoods.

Average annual NRP expenditures for the city's 20 most diverse neighborhoods fell by 30% from 2015 to 2021 but increased by 37% in the 20 least diverse neighborhoods.

Likewise, annual NRP expenditures for the city's 20 least affluent neighborhoods fell by 47%, while expenditures in the most affluent neighborhoods increased by 61%.

It is not because the funds aren't available. The NRP fund balance is currently around \$26 million. The least affluent and most diverse neighborhoods have significantly more NRP funds stored up than their more affluent counterparts because the NRP generously funded the least affluent neighborhoods. These same neighborhoods also generated millions in additional revenue to support NRP projects.

This is also not a problem of more affluent and less diverse neighborhoods taking funds from less affluent or more diverse neighborhoods.

The problem is a city structure that is not designed properly to serve diverse and low-income communities well. In fact, it is designed to fail those communities.

Many neighborhood leaders report that the city's Neighborhood and Community Relations Department erected barriers where the NRP used to create opportunities. It should come as a surprise to no one that more affluent communities will have more discretionary time and influence to overcome barriers that will be insurmountable for communities where most residents work multiple part-time jobs just to stay ahead. But these are precisely the kinds of barriers the city has established.

The Roof Depot controversy, and many similar issues, should show that the city's agenda is not always the same as the community's agenda. The problem is that the city has all the authority as well as the funding. It gets to set the rules and to make them ... or break them. It is now using control of neighborhood funding to try to control neighborhood organizations.

The NRP provided power and authority to residents working through their neighborhood organizations, and this became a threat to the city's power and control. It is past time for the mayor and City Council to reform or close the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, and to empower and restore autonomy to neighborhood organizations.

My (non)dinner with Brian



BY TONY BOUZA

"My Dinner with Andre" was one of my favorite flicks, so when I spied Andre Gregory in an abandoned Cape Cod pond parking lot, I rushed over and gushed my enthusiasm over his creation. He guessed I was a professor and I had to dampen his reaction and explain I was just a bureaucrat.

In any event, the movie was a wonderful illustration of the value of curiosity, introspection and transactional analysis.

So, when a secretary called to ask if I'd have lunch with the new Minneapolis police chief, I happily agreed to do it.

Weeks before the event I was accosted in the lobby of my building by a guy alleging he was Brian O'Hara and was there for lunch.

Huh?

I segued into an hour's chat in the lobby with this eccentric, personable stranger. How very peculiar that he'd seek the wis-

dom of former luminaries. Personally, I'd rather have a tooth or two extracted than seek wisdom from "formers."

And my impression?

Very favorable.

O'Hara struck me as experienced (with a history in law enforcement at all levels), educated (a master's degree from Rutgers) and—most important of all—politically savvy. Looked like a winner, but two cavils intruded.

One, he floated the notion of adding bloat to a distended body by adding still more brass to the ranks and, two ...

I never quite fathomed how he saw the police union and how he'd deal with them.

Overall, I'd say he looks like a winner, and I hope Minneapolis hangs on to him. Remember, the one predecessor I had any use for, William McManus, was hired away by San Antonio, where he served as chief for decades.

I held forth for an hour, and we never did get to eat, and I never heard from him again.

So, let us pray.

I'm sorry to intrude again, but the topic is irresistible.

Hasta la vista, baby!

[Editor's note: McManus was not reappointed after he tagged Mayor Rybak for letting his Prius crash into another car after he left it running.]



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CELEBRATE SUMMER ON NICOLLET AVE.

Nicollet Avenue from the Mall to (the city of) Bloomington – returning soon!

BY DEBRA KEEFER RAMAGE

Yes, Nicollet Avenue was originally a main north-south corridor that went from downtown to Bloomington. Very few people remember those days today, but we live in hope that it will soon be so again. Nowadays, Nicollet

Avenue is essentially two unconnected streets. One is the funky, ethnically diverse, exciting avenue stretching from the Minneapolis Central Library through the pedestrianized Nicollet Mall to “Eat Street,” and ending just after the crossing of the Greenway. The other is the only slightly

less ethnically diverse and exciting south Minneapolis corridor stretching from south of a dead Kmart through the increasingly upscale neighborhoods of Lynedale, Kingfield, Tangletown and Windom, before crossing the border to Richfield, Bloomington and beyond.

So let’s talk about that dead Kmart, and the reincarnated U.S. post office nearby. In 2019, it was announced that 2020 would be the year plans were finalized and the demolition of the Kmart, in order to reconnect and revitalize Nicollet Avenue, would begin. Obviously, 2020 had other things in store for us. Probably due to hosting the Minneapolis 5th Precinct police station nearby, Nicollet and Lake were the site of major riot damage in the George Floyd uprising at the end of May 2020, with the Kmart and the Lake Street station post office



An eclectic Japanese hotdog from Kyatchi

at 110 E. 31st St. sustaining the most damage. In fact, the Lake Street station post office, like the Minnehaha station post office at 27th Avenue and East 31st, was burned to the ground.

This eventually led to Kmart simply closing and walking away, whereas in the former plan, the new redevelopment would have included a smaller, modernized Kmart in the new Nicollet-Lake crossing development. It also led

to the empty building being repurposed as a temporary home for the two destroyed post offices. Now both post offices have been rebuilt, and their leases at the former Kmart building expire next month. In a May 11 story on KSTP (kstp.com) Mayor Jacob Frey in his State of the City address, and project supervisor Rebecca Parrell in a subsequent in-

See Nicollet, page 12

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11

R ON NICOLLET AVE.

shop.honeycombmpls.com) which carries all their beverage selection, plus skin and hair care products, homewares, and miscellaneous merch.

Another Nicollet Avenue shop getting a boost from this trend is Uffda Cannabis Dispensary, which was founded on Bloomington Avenue but has now added a Tangle-town location, at 5456 Nicollet Ave. They only carry cannabis-derived products (marijuana or hemp), but this includes not only edibles (gummies, chocolates, cookies, etc.) and beverages (seltzers primarily) but also tinctures, topical balms and creams, vaping supplies, and straight-up weed in fancy little apothecary jars. They have a “shop” website at www.uffda.cc/s/shop, but apparently it’s for looking only, as it doesn’t seem to be enabled for shopping.

At 3700 Nicollet Ave. you will find one of a handful of truly righteous eateries in Minneapolis, the “B” Corporation certified Butter Bakery Cafe. This cafe is out in front on many causes, such as youth housing access and employment, labor rights, AIDS awareness and survival, supporting local artists,

organic and local food sourcing, reusable wares in restaurant takeout and more. One of their innovative programs is a CSB, which is like a CSA but with “bakery” substituted for “agriculture.” In other words, a bread subscription service. These run in seasonal cycles, and the spring one is just finishing up. The summer CSB share starts June 19 and runs for 10 weeks at a cost of \$70. You have to come and pick up your bread (or have a friend pick it up or, if you’re away, you can do-



MPD 5th Precinct station on Nicollet and 31st Street

nate it to their youth housing partner Nicollet Square), and you can apply for a share on their website at butterbakerycafe.com.

Less than a block away is another favorite spot of mine – Kyatchi. They have great sushi, but it’s more than just a sushi place. Their happy hour menu is minimalist yet rich in unique experiences, at very low prices. Their dine-in menu is extensive, yet also selective, with multiple sushi categories, enticing small plates and hot dog cat-

egories, and with drinks limited to beer, whiskey, sake, wine and non-alcoholic beverages. There is a three-item dessert menu that Japanizes western classics through such means as miso-caramel, or matcha-almond crumble.

Remember Curran’s Restaurant? Remember how it was sold to a developer to add a new rental housing spot? Well, that spot is now completed and open for leasing, and it’s called [the Rosa Apartments](#). Rental

See Nicollet, page 14

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CELEBRATE SUMMER ON NICOLLET AVE.

Nicollet, from page 13

prices range from \$1,290 for the smallest studio to \$2,545 for the largest three bedroom. The complex is five stories with 79 units in all. It offers “amenities hand-picked for the modern renter.” This includes fiber internet (free in common areas), pets allowed and a pet spa for their enjoyment,

washers and dryers in the units, smartphone-based secure access, and a coffee and ice cream kiosk. There’s also an exercise suite and a walkability score that’s off the charts. You can access more information at apartments.com or at the property managers’ own website.

If you have not yet embraced urban living to that extent and have an old-fashioned lawn to



New Lake Street post office at 110 E. 31st St. (left) and the old Lake Street post office after it burned in 2022 (right).

maintain, or maybe some fruit trees or a flower garden, you should know about Magnuson Sod and Klier’s Nursery and Garden Center at 5901 Nicollet Ave. This is a well-established family business with lots of positive reviews from customers over the years. The company sources sod from their own local farms, and unlike chain garden centers or big box stores, the sod you buy

has been cut 24 hours or less from when you get it. By not being part of a hardware store or the afterthought of a landscaping service, Magnuson Sod and Klier’s Nursery are able to focus just on products and services for your lawn and garden. Among their offerings is expert knowledge of equipment, from lawn mowers to snow blowers. They sell, repair, maintain and, in some cases, rent

(e.g., sod rollers, a thing you will probably only need once in your lifetime). Also, if you’re short on storage space, you can store your mower or blower with them during the off-season, as well as getting routine service on it.

Lastly we’re going to look at one spot that’s a little beyond our normal focus on Nicollet Avenue, in that it’s way out in Richfield, in the Hub shopping center in fact, at the intersection of Nicollet and 66th Street. We’re doing this because it’s awesome and we know it’s awesome because it’s consistently ranked as one of the Best Comics Stores in Minnesota on the website bestthingsmn.com. (And there, they have the address as Minneapolis.) Hot Comics and Collectibles is this – ahem – marvel. They have been in business for over 30 years, and offer additional services such as a subscriber pull-list for comics series, and a 10% all-year discount card for \$15 if you’re a frequent buyer.



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• MAY DAY •

Southside Pride / NEIGHBORHOOD EDITION



MIRAC demonstration on May 1

The Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee (MIRAC) sponsored a demonstration and slow march down Lake Street to call attention to the exploitation of immigrant workers. More than a hundred people followed a flatbed truck from the MPS Adult Education Center at Lake and 21st Avenue to the Roof Depot site at 28th Street on Monday, May 1.

"May 1st is celebrated in most of the world as International Workers Day. In many countries it is a national holiday. International Workers Day has its origin in the fight for an eight-hour workday in the United States, where there were massive strikes and sharp confrontations in May of 1886. Eight strike leaders were framed and faced the death penalty. Four of them were executed, while one committed suicide and the other three were freed a decade later. May 1st was taken up as a day remember the 'Martyrs of Chicago' and the workers' struggle around the world."—MIRAC

The march and rally were supported by more than 30 local progressive organizations.

On a day sometime between the spring equinox and the summer solstice, long ago, at a time when peasants worked every day all the time, before the five-day, 40-hour workweek, peasants and workers decided there must be one day just for them. For one day they would lay down their tools. They would dance around a pole and, maybe, that pole dancing would bring fertility to their fields. They would eat and drink as much as they wanted. It would be their holiday.

That day, that spontaneous demonstration of joy at the first warm day, that assertion of their rights by workers and peasants in Northern Europe probably more than a thousand years ago, has come down to us as May Day.



Sandy Spieler opening her arms above and dancing below

The sun was attached to the top of the Maypole and the Maypole was raised. Sandy Spieler, the mother goddess of MayDay and Heart of the Beast for more than 40 years, opened her arms, signaling the sun to open its arms and welcome warmth and life to South Minneapolis. And, afterwards, we all danced with joy.

MAY DAY



The sun arrives.

Finally, after a long and brutal winter, the sun arrived from a distant shore. And we all sang "You Are My Sunshine" and "Gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside."



Southside Battletrain Ferris wheel

The first Sunday in May was the day that In The Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre celebrated MayDay each year since 1975. COVID-19 almost killed the MayDay celebration. For two years there was no MayDay Parade down Bloomington Avenue, but on Sunday, May 7, the MayDay Parade was led, once again, by the Southside Battletrain—the creation of an alt-punk South Minneapolis guild of metal sculptors and welders. Their gigantic floats included, among other fantastical creations, cartoonish dinosaurs, a skateboard ramp inside a cage and a Ferris wheel with three carriages.



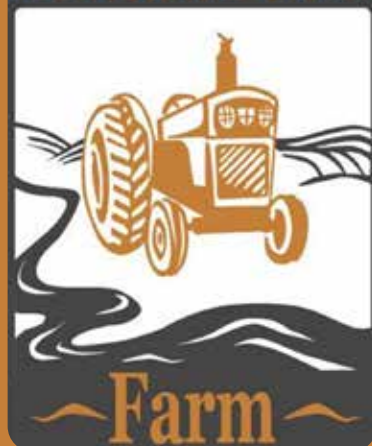
E. Timothy Dean drumming and dancer dancing

Not everyone gave up on MayDay during the pandemic. Timothy Dean convened the drum circle by the lake in 2021 and 2022. It was "the third year of 'Make-Yer-Own-Fun' day in Powderhorn Park!" he proclaimed on Facebook. The drum circle's rhythms brought the sun across the lake in the familiar canoe flotilla, and they had enough fuel left in the tank to accompany ecstatic dancing after the sun ceremony.

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EVENTS

Fence Construction Update from Community-University Health Care Center (CUHCC)
June 1 through July 31
CUHCC is building a fence around its north parking lot beginning on June 1. During the eight-week project, CUHCC will lose eight parking spots, which may result in more patients and staff parking on Bloomington Avenue and 16th Avenue South. CUHCC is building the fence to improve safety for CUHCC staff, patients and community members. During and after its construction, CUHCC remains a welcoming clinic dedicated to serving the health needs of everyone.

‘Groovin’ in the Garden’ Free concert series
Wednesdays in June and July 6 to 8 p.m.
Como Park Zoo & Conservatory 1225 Estabrook Dr., St. Paul
Como Park Zoo & Conservatory’s free concert series “Groovin’ In The Garden” returns, featuring some of the Twin Cities’ finest musicians, rain or shine!* Pack a picnic and dancing shoes, spread out a blanket and join us for these FREE outdoor concerts and activities in front of the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory every Wednesday from June 7 to July 26 at

6 to 8 p.m. Hotdogs, ice cream treats, beer and wine will be available to purchase.
*If it rains, we’ll move inside the Visitor Center Porch next to the Water Gardens!
June 7, Innocent Reggae Band – Packed with thought-provoking lyrics, cool guitar, and captivating stage presence, Innocent puts up quite an exhilarating show.
June 14, 13 Arrows – 13 Arrows bring rock and roll back to its raw, unbound and authentic roots.
June 21, Ty Pow & The Holy North – Ty Pow and The Holy North is a Minnesota-raised Americana, blues, and alt-country band featuring members of Cloud Cult, 4ontheFloor, Jillian Rae and many other Midwestern staples.
June 28, Red Eye Ruby – Red Eye Ruby is a retro roots-rock collective, channeling the soulful rock sounds of Amy Winehouse and the rhythmic roots of New Orleans.
More information at comozooconservatory.org.

Garden Tea Party Fundraiser for Seward Freedom Greens
Saturday, June 10, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Greenspace behind Seward Café 2129 E. Franklin Ave., Mpls.
Freedom Greens is a queer-run community farm that aims to increase food access in South Minneapolis.

Beginning in the spring of 2021, a new collective has been taking care of the garden in the back lot of the Seward Cafe. Rather than divided into individual plots, Freedom Greens is one large urban farm that is tended to by community members. Anyone who shares the work of taking care of the garden shares the food grown at harvest time. Any excess produce is donated to the Seward Cafe Free Store as well as the greater network of Free Stores and mutual aid food projects throughout South Minneapolis.
The Garden Tea Party fundraiser will feature a makers’ market, herbal tea, pastries, screen printing, garden tours and live music! To support this work, stay updated on progress, and to learn how to get involved take a look at their Instagram page @seward_freedom_greens.

Solace at the Palace
Sunday, June 11, noon to 6 p.m.
3032 Minnehaha Ave., Mpls.
Solace at the Palace will be a day of community resilience and recovery through art. Longfellow Community Council is sponsoring an interactive art experience in the heart of downtown Longfellow, with 20 vendors, art workshops open to all (registration required), musical performances, food trucks and kids’ art activities. For more information and to register

for workshops, go to <https://longfellow.org/solace-at-the-palace/>.

Walker Art Center Sensory Friendly Sunday
Sunday, June 11, 8 to 11 a.m.
Walker Art Center
725 Vineland Pl., Mpls.
Sensory Friendly Sunday is a FREE monthly event designed for kids, teens and adults with sensory processing differences, autism spectrum disorder or developmental disabilities. Attendees can play a free round of mini golf on the Walker’s rooftop. More info at <https://walkerart.org/calendar/2023/sensory-friendly-sunday-june-2023>.

Friday Art-Making in the Garden
Fridays, June 16 – Aug. 25 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Minneapolis Sculpture Garden
725 Vineland Pl., Mpls.
Every Friday this summer, visit the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden to try a FREE drop-in art-making activity designed for ages 4 and up. With all art supplies provided and a new project each week, this fun program gives anyone the chance to come together to explore their own creativity. More info at <https://walkerart.org/calendar/2023/friday-art-making-in-the-garden-summer-2023>.

‘The Stories Whiteness Tells Itself’ Author David Mura in conversation

with Shannon Gibney
Tuesday, June 13, 7 p.m.
In person and online
East Side Freedom Library
1105 Greenbrier St., St. Paul
Twin Cities author David Mura will discuss his newest book “The Stories Whiteness Tells Itself: Racial Myths and Our American Narratives” (University of Minnesota Press) at an event with East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul on Tuesday, June 13 at 7 p.m. After a short talk and reading, fellow local author Shannon Gibney will lead a discussion with Mura. From the country’s founding through the summer of Black Lives Matter in 2020, David Mura unmasks how white stories about race attempt to erase the brutality of the past and underpin systemic racism in the present. Mura shows how deeply we need to change our racial narratives to dissolve the myth of Whiteness and fully acknowledge the experiences of Black Americans. This is a hybrid event for virtual and in-person audiences. In-person registration is limited. Masks are required in the library. Register at <https://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/events/david-mura-reading-the-stories-whiteness-tells-itself/>.

Duniya Dance and Drum Community Performance Class
Wednesdays, June 14 – July 12

Cam, from page 1

theirs, although not necessarily for public housing. St. Paul, for example, collected over \$5 million last year, Bloomington \$2.7 million and Hennepin County \$17.9 million
“We have a \$210 million backlog,” said MPHA Executive Director Abdi Warsame. “This is a tool that can work to make sure Minneapolis gets better, that the most vulnerable population in Minneapolis gets housed.”
At the BET meeting, public housing residents spoke in support of the proposal and against the poor conditions of their housing that included leaky

pipes, crumbling ceilings, mold, mildew and broken ventilation systems.
“Four years ago I was homeless and I signed up for public housing. I am grateful for it,” said Belinda Walker, a public housing high-rise resident. “Sometimes I am afraid to complain due to the fact that our building might be shut down and I know what it is to be homeless, so I just ask that the levy be passed.”
Mary McGovern, a resident and member of the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council, said, “We have 42 high-rises in Minneapolis, and we want to preserve these high-rises. We want them to last for years and

years to come. We have vulnerable adults who need places to live. We want our residents to feel like they are safe and secure, and the walls and ceilings are not going to fall in on them.”
Currently, roughly 26,000 people live in MPHA housing. About 21,500 (83%) are Black/African American, 10,000 (39%) are under 18, and 5,000 are over 62 years of age.
According to the MPHA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has only provided about 10% of the funding necessary for major building improvements. In 2022, MPHA received nearly \$20 million from HUD, but estimated that with only HUD’s funding the shortfall would reach \$403 million by 2043.
“On any given night MPHA houses nearly 5% of the city’s population. The agency’s nearly 6,000 units are critical city infrastructure and require a commensurate investment from the city,” said Warsame. “The mayor and City Council should seize this opportunity to approve this new funding for the public housing authority to help deliver the affordable housing Minneapolis residents desperately need.” Prior to the BET meeting, Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council residents, Minneapolis BET President Samantha Pree-Stinson, and Council Members Robin Wonsley (Ward 2), Jamal Osman (Ward 6), Jason Chavez (Ward 9), and Elliott Payne (Ward 1), joined Warsame at a press conference to call for restoring the housing tax levy and making the long-term commitment to use it to preserve and build new public housing in Minneapolis.
Mayor Jacob Frey, while supportive of public housing, has

not supported using the levy in the past and did not commit to supporting it at the meeting of the BET, of which he is also a member. In recent budgets, he has committed to providing \$1 million in ongoing funds and also on a program-by-program or project-by-project basis. This year the city has budgeted close to \$15 million to various MPHA projects and programs.
“The truth is that public housing has been underfunded by the federal government since around the time when I was born,” Frey said. “The city has a role here where we need to step up and we need to do it thoughtfully and smartly where we’re collaborating with other entities as well, otherwise we are going to continue to see this backlog.”
The mayor raised several questions about the MPHA report and exchanged comments with Warsame. Warsame emphasized the need for ongoing reliable funding, similar to an agreement crafted during former Mayor Betsy Hodges’ term. Codified in city ordinance in 2016, that agreement provided \$800 million over 20 years to help the city and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board keep up with needed maintenance and operations costs for city streets and neighborhood parks.
“My pledge to you, each and every one of you,” said Frey, “is that we at the city will do everything possible that we can to make this right to get the funding that you need.”
One reason why mayors, including Frey, may resist using the housing levy is because of a desire to keep property taxes lower and because it may make it harder to raise taxes for new initiatives or to maintain other

city services.
“I’ve been hearing about the backlog in maintenance and renovations since the 1980s,” said BET Vice-President Steve Brandt, who pointed out that the city is already planning to increase the levy by 6.4%. “By my back-of-the-envelope calculations,” he said, “adding \$12 million to that would push the increase up to 8.9%.”
One solution might be to start the increase at a lower amount and gradually increase it over several years to provide the necessary funding. Connecting it to the special housing levy could add certainty and clarity to taxpayers who would see it as a separate item on property tax statements. Another option could be to reduce proposed spending in other areas.
According to the MPHA report, under their proposal residential property taxpayers would pay between \$31 and \$108 more each year depending on the value of their property. A homeowner with a house valued at the city median valuation of \$316,000 would pay an additional \$52.87 per year, or less than \$5 a month.
In the weeks ahead, Warsame and MPHA are hoping that the City Council will pass a resolution consenting to MPHA using the full levying authority or that Frey will include the levy as a part of his 2024 budget recommendation this August.
“What is the priority and who is the priority for Minneapolis? If the budget is a moral document, where does it stand when it comes to the most vulnerable population?” asked Warsame. “We are an affluent city. We have the resources. Let’s prioritize our poorest communities.”

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• COMMUNITY CALENDAR •

Southside Pride / NEIGHBORHOOD EDITION

6:30 to 8 p.m.
Center For The Performing Arts
3754 Pleasant Ave. S., Mpls.
Performances July 14-15, 7 p.m.
Lake Harriet Rose Garden
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Five Class Session - \$100 (kids 15 & under by donation). Register with payment to Venmo @DuniyaMN or Cash App - \$DuniyaDrumandDance. Questions? Contact whitney@duniyadrumanddance.org.

Soul of the Southside Juneteenth Festival 2023
Monday, June 19, noon to 8 p.m.
Under the Canopy @The Hook and Ladder Theater
3010 Minnehaha Ave., Mpls.
Soul of the Southside is a free open street festival that celebrates Black culture and the healing power of community. Taking place at The Hook and Ladder in South Minneapolis on Juneteenth (Monday, June 19) this vibrant event will feature music, art, food and entertainment that will nourish the soul and empower the people. Come out and join us as we come together to celebrate the soul of Southside Minneapolis! All ages, family friendly. RSVP (free registration). Must RSVP in advance for guaranteed admission. Free community event with limited capacity. Rain or shine. Full performance schedule and

RSVP/registration at <https://thehookmpls.com/event/utc23-soulofthesouthside/>.
Longfellow/Seward Healthy Seniors Senior Social & Health Talks
June: Free from Clutter
Tuesday, June 20, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
2730 E. 31st St., Mpls.
Learn routines which will help reduce clutter in your home. Certified Professional Organizer, Christine Daves, will show you how to identify which items merit space in your home, and then where to place the items to make finding and putting away easy. Also learn how and where to pass on things you don't want any more. Senior Social and Health Talks occur on the third Tuesday of each month from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. and feature guest speakers on health/wellness issues, and time to socialize! Refreshments are provided! A Nurse is In/ Blood Pressure Clinic is also offered. All socials are held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2730 E. 31st St., Mpls.

Hosmer Library Public Art Opportunity
Due Thursday, June 22
Artists of all artistic mediums are invited to submit qualifications to be considered for this public art opportunity. The Public Art commission is open to all artists, or artist-led teams, that live in the Central neighborhood (zip codes 55407, 55408 or 55409) or have a demonstrated connection to the Hosmer Library and/or Central community. All materials must be received by June 22, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. CDT. Learn more about the opportunity and upload submissions

via the supplier portal for Hennepin County Library. Go to bit.ly/HC-Suppliers.
'The Buddha Prince'
Fridays – Sundays, June 23 – July 9
Washburn Fair Oaks Park
200 E. 24th St., Mpls.
"The Buddha Prince," a "walking play" exploring the extraordinary life and legacy of the 14th Dalai Lama through physical theater, mask, puppetry, and Tibetan music and dance, will be performed on Fridays through Sundays, June 23–July 9, at Washburn Fair Oaks Park in Minneapolis. Presented in the unique style for which producer TigerLion Arts (TLA) is renowned, this all-ages play transports audiences through scenes unfolding on a journey through nature with dance and live music orchestrated by master Tibetan artist Tenzin Ngawang.
"The Buddha Prince" explores the Dalai Lama's life from boyhood in a free Tibet to his escape and exile to India, using excerpts from his own teachings and autobiographies. It features more than 20 professional actor/musicians, youth performers from the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota's (TAFM) traditional dance program and Tibetan community singers. "The Buddha Prince" was co-created by music and dance director Tenzin Ngawang and writer/director Markell Kiefer, a Minnesota native and TLA's executive artistic director, as an offering for peace and a celebration of Tibetan heritage. Minnesota is home to the second largest Tibetan population in North America. "The Buddha Prince" is co-presented by TAFM and endorsed with acclaim by the Office of Tibet.

Hennepin History Museum, across the street from Washburn park, will host a companion photo exhibit honoring the Dalai Lama and Tibetans in Minnesota. Related activities will also include post-show discussions and Tibetan dance workshops.
Accessibility and Preparedness: The show starts at the corner of 24th Street and 3rd Avenue and moves between four locations in the park. Wheelchair accessibility is possible, golf cart transport may be reserved in advance, and portable seating will be available to those who need it. Audiences generally sit on the grass, stand and walk between scene locations. Performers help facilitate the audience flow throughout the play. Because the play is performed outdoors, audiences should come prepared for nature's elements and wear appropriate shoes for walking on dirt paths and grass. Performances are generally rain or shine. Tickets, on sale now, are \$25 for adults with a pay-what-you-can option. Free for children under 12. To buy and for additional information visit TigerLion.org.

Southside Semilla Celebration
Sunday, June 25, 4 to 7 p.m.
Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts
2742 15th Ave. S., Mpls.
The Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts invites you to a celebration of our Southside neighborhood, and a chance to plant beauty in the community. Come and make art that can become Semillas or Seeds of Hope! Learn how to make lanterns for a procession this fall on Lake Street! Local professional artists will be teaching how to make art. Live music

by local musicians and open mic. Great food. Free and family friendly. From 4-7 p.m. on Sunday, June 25, followed by an outdoor puppet show by Open Eye Theatre. Summer Young Leaders program applications are available now, for youth ages 11-15: make art, beautify the community, learn about careers. www.semillacenter.org

Join Nokomis Healthy Seniors' FREE Caregiver Support Group
4th Thursdays, 11 a.m.
Nokomis Healthy Seniors
Bethel Church
4120 17th Ave. S., Mpls.
Often, caregivers don't know where to turn for support and advice. A support group can be a lifesaver, allowing caregivers to talk to others who are experiencing the same joys and challenges, and who can not only empathize, but offer valuable insights and suggestions. Held on the 4th Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. at our office located inside Bethel Church, 4120-17th Ave. S., Minneapolis. For more information, call the Nokomis Healthy Seniors office at 612-729-5499.

Neighborhood Roots Farmers Markets
Nokomis Farmers Market
Wednesdays, June 14 to Sept. 27
4 to 8 p.m.
5167 Chicago Ave.
Kingfield Farmers Market
Sundays, through Oct. 29
8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
4055 Nicollet Ave.
Fulton Farmers Market
Saturdays, through Oct. 28
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
4901 Chowen Ave. S.



Southside Pride

NEIGHBORHOOD EDITION

Southside Pride is a monthly community newspaper delivered on the First Monday of each month to convenient locations in and around our Southside communities. We are proud of the racial and cultural diversity of the Southside, and we oppose racism and other efforts to keep us apart as a community.

If you want to share some news of your church, school or organization, please write us at:

Southside Pride
2721 E. 42ND STREET SUITE B
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55406
CALL US AT 612-822-4662
email: editor@southsidepride.com

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RADIO WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

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kfaio.org

90.3 / 106.7 fm

MPLS. - ST. PAUL - THE WORLD

EVENTS

Comfort Detained Migrants

Saturday, June 10, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Online via Zoom

Conversations with Friends is holding a training for bilingual speakers of English and either Spanish or Arabic to become pen pals with people detained by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement in Minnesota. The training will take place on Saturday, June 10, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., in English, via Zoom, with multiple presenters (info about immigration law; profiles/stories/audios of people with whom we have written and visited); “active listening” sessions; multiple breaks; Q&A; and more.

This training will be in English and at this time we are seeking bilingual (Spanish/English, Arabic/English, 22 years old and older) volunteers. To register for our training, please email us at CWFconversationswithfriends@gmail.com and provide:

- a) Your full name, address and cell phone number.
- b) Your ethnicity (e.g., Hispanic/Latino, Black, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, White/Caucasian).
- c) Languages spoken.

More information at <https://conversationswithfriendsmn.org/events/>.

Summer by the Creek

Sunday, June 11, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
1720 E. Minnehaha Pkwy., Mpls.
9:30 a.m. Outdoor worship
11 a.m. Music by neighborhood residents
Food and children’s activities until 1 p.m.

Free of charge but accepting donations for the church’s Food Pantry

ACTION Project – A Commitment to Inclusion in our Neighborhoods

Good news! Registration for the 2023-2024 cohort for the ACTION

Project is coming soon! We are excited to announce that in addition to congregational registration, individuals not connected to a participating faith community can now participate in the ACTION Project as well ... on their own!

To learn more, join us for any of the following ACTION Project info sessions:

Tuesday, June 13, noon to 1 p.m.

Thursday, June 15, 7 to 8 p.m.

Monday, July 10, 7 to 8 p.m.

Wednesday, July 19, noon to 1 p.m.

www.mnchurches.org/what-we-do/action-project

A busy season for welcoming refugees

We are in urgent need of the following items: dish soap, laundry detergent, all-purpose cleaner, toilet paper, toilet bowl cleaner, mops, brooms, cleaning buckets, sponges, waste baskets, laundry baskets, etc. Additionally, there is a need for personal hygiene items (deodorant, shampoo, bar soap, razors, shaving cream, bath towel sets) as well as large pots, pans and frying pans.

Whether they be new or gently used, your items will help welcome and support our new neighbors, making them feel at home more quickly. For questions or to schedule a drop-off, please contact RSVolunteers@mnchurches.org or call 612-230-3219. OR order online from our Amazon Wishlist at https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2144RAQ240DR9/ref=nav_wishlist_lists_1?encoding=UTF8&type=wishlist. Thank you for joining us in this ministry of welcoming the stranger!

Community BBQ

Saturday, July 29, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Living Spirit UMC
4501 Bloomington Ave., Mpls.
Save the date! Living Spirit’s annual community BBQ will be held on Sat-

urday, July 29. More information will be posted on our website soon. www.livingspiritumc.org

SHARING FOOD

Calvary Emergency Food Shelf

2553 Chicago Ave., Mpls.

612-827-2504, ext. 3

The Calvary Food Shelf has reopened in our new location at 3553 Chicago Ave. and continues to create access to fresh, nutritious food for the community. We are open for individual choice shopping BY APPOINTMENT on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Call 612-827-2504, ext. 3 for more information.

New Creation Baptist Church

1414 E. 48th St., Mpls.

612-825-6933

We’re still here to serve you on the first through the fourth Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We have reopened the food shelf to choice shopping. We do require mask, sanitizer and temp check. Be safe and God bless! <https://www.facebook.com/NCBCfoodshelf>.

Saturdays (except 5th Saturdays)
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
(Brown door on the corner of 48th St. and 15th Ave.)

Nokomis Heights Lutheran Church

5300 10th Ave. S., Mpls.

612-825-6846

Serving Loaves and Fishes free community meals on Wednesdays from 5 to 6 p.m. The meals are all “to-go” meals, served from the northwest door on 53rd Street. These meals are free to anyone, no questions asked. You might have had a hard day and simply cannot cook dinner. Or maybe you’ve paid your last bill for the month and cannot buy groceries. Whatever your circumstance, you are welcome. You can simply drive

or walk up to the church and receive a meal any Wednesday evening between 5 and 6 p.m.

First Nations Kitchen

3044 Longfellow Ave., Mpls.

612-791-1253

First Nations Kitchen, an outreach of All Saints Episcopal Indian Mission, welcomes all to our weekly To Go meals and Produce Give Away every Sunday from 4-5 p.m. outside our building. We cook fresh, organic, indigenous meals and give away organic produce rain or shine. This is a barrier-free food program. To donate or volunteer contact us at director@firstnationskitchen.org or go to our website: <https://firstnationskitchen.org>.

Community Meals at Walker Church

3104 16th Ave. S., Mpls.

612-722-6612

Free to-go meals and groceries are available for pick-up every Monday from noon to 2 p.m. All are welcome. Sisters’ Camelot holds a separate food distribution out of Walker Church every third and fifth Tuesday of the month starting at 2:30 p.m. Follow Sisters’ Camelot on Facebook or at <http://sisterscamelot.org/> for more.

Minnehaha United

Methodist Church

3701 E. 50th St., Mpls.

612-721-6231

The Minnehaha Food Shelf serves food for the hungry on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. We help distribute up to 30,000 pounds of food each month. In response to the COVID-19 virus, we have changed many things to protect both our guests and our volunteers – rigorous cleaning routines, streamlined procedures, moving outside, wearing face masks and following the 6-foot social distancing guideline. Please be patient as we

continue to improve what we do. <https://www.facebook.com/MinnehahaFoodShelf/>

Greater Friendship Missionary

Baptist Church and Friendship

Community Service

2600 E. 38th St., Mpls.

Food Hub

Free food, hygiene products, and some household goods. Tuesday and Thursday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please bring ID and wear a mask. Social distancing guidelines are in place.

Groveland Emergency Food Shelf

1900 Nicollet Ave., Mpls.

612-871-0277

Monday – Friday
9:30 a.m. to noon
On Groveland Avenue between Nicollet and Lasalle (Temporary entrance on Nicollet Avenue)
Hosted in the basement of Plymouth Congregational Church
Delivery is available for individuals who are housebound due to disability. <https://www.grovelandfoodshelf.org/>

Soup for You! Café at Bethany

2511 E. Franklin Ave., Mpls.

612-332-2397

Soup for You! operates out of the basement of century-old and deeply rooted Bethany Lutheran Church that we honor in our name. After two years of COVID lockdown and serving our community through a set of three glass doors, Soup for You! Café is back to an open dining room. Monday through Friday, noon to 1 p.m. Wednesdays, groceries, noon to 1 p.m. Large space, high ceilings, only four chairs per table, all volunteers vaccinated/boosted. <https://soupforyou.info/>

The Southside Religious Community Welcomes You

Bahá’í

BAHÁ’I CENTER OF MINNEAPOLIS

3644 Chicago Ave. S.
612-823-3494

MinneapolisBahai@gmail.com

Devotions at the Bahá’í Center and via Zoom, Sundays 10 am, and Tuesdays via Zoom 6:30 pm

See www.minneapolisbahai.org
So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.

-Baha’u’llah

Christian

CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Worshiping at 2742 15th Ave. S.

612-827-2504 or www.clchurch.org

Sunday Worship at 10 am
Interim Pastor Kjell Ferris
A Reconciling in Christ Congregation

CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST. ALBERT THE GREAT

E. 29th St. & 32nd Ave. S.
612-724-3643

www.saintalbertthegreat.org

Weekend Masses

Saturday 5 pm

Sunday 9:30 am (also live-streamed on Facebook)

Sunday 12 noon

Weekday Masses M, T, TH, F at 8:15 am in the Chapel, east door and elevator entry

FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

3430 E. 51st St.

612-729-5463

www.faithlutheranmpls.org

Sunday Worship 9 am and online on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/felcempls/>

Blind Ministry – June 17, noon to 2 pm

Education Hour - 10:30 am

AA group - Mondays 6:30 pm

Senior Exercise Class - Mondays 10 am

NA groups - Wednesdays

7:30 pm

Vacancy Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jared Yogerst

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)

1720 E. Minnehaha Pkwy.

holycrossmpls.org

Sunday Worship at 9:30 am

An inclusive community encouraging lives of service

LIVING SPIRIT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4501 Bloomington Ave.

612-721-5025

Multicultural/Intergenerational

Justice — Generosity — Faith

Worship In-Person or Online

10:30 am Sundays

Online: livingspiritumc.org

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Center for Changing Lives

2400 Park Ave. S., 612-871-

8831

www.messiahlutheranmpls.org

Sunday 9 am Traditional Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday 11 am Praise Worship, with Holy Communion on June

18

Fellowship Lunch 12:30 pm,

June 11 and 25

MINNEHAHA COMMUNION

LUTHERAN CHURCH

4101 37th Ave. S., 612-722-9527

9:45 am Sunday Worship in

person & livestream

Go to church website for info

www.minnehahacommunion.org

12-step groups Tuesday through Friday evenings

NEW CREATION BAPTIST CHURCH

1414 E. 48th St.

612-825-6933

In-person Sunday Worship

10:45 am

Also on Facebook at:

[www.Facebook.com/NewCre-](http://www.Facebook.com/NewCreationBaptistChurch)

[ationBaptistChurch](https://newcreationbaptist-churchmn.org/)

[https://newcreationbaptist-](https://newcreationbaptist-churchmn.org/)

[churchmn.org/](https://newcreationbaptist-churchmn.org/)

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Daniel B.

McKizzie

NOKOMIS HEIGHTS LUTHERAN CHURCH – ELCA

5300 10th Ave. S.

612-825-6846

www.nokomisheights.org

Sunday worship 10 am, 1st

Sunday of month in sanctuary;

other Sundays outside on front

lawn (weather permitting)

Online worship premiers Sun-

days at 10 am on Facebook and

YouTube.

ST. JOAN OF ARC CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

www.stjoan.com, 4537 Third Ave.

Saturday, 5 pm in the Church

Sunday, 7:45 am in the Church,

9 & 11 am in the gym

Video available on our website

and Facebook page

We Welcome You Wherever

You Are

On Your Journey

TRINITY LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

Augsburg College, Hoversten

Chapel

Riverside & 22nd Aves.

612-333-2561

[www.trinitylutherancongrega-](http://www.trinitylutherancongregation.org)

[tion.org](http://www.trinitylutherancongregation.org)

Sunday Worship 10 am

Pastors: Jane Buckley-Farlee &

Alem Asmelash

Office: 2001 Riverside Ave.



All Directory Churches are Wheelchair Accessible

Walker, from page 7

buted the young and activist New City Church to a packed house in Walker’s dining hall. (See minnesotaumc.org/blogdetail/new-city-church-launches-with-a-packed-house-10107541.) As Walker, with more than half of its members over 55, gently declined in numbers, New City rapidly grew. When the uprising began, Walker Church, the building, became a sanctuary for embattled community activists, including young, queer and trans people, as well as those just

seeking shelter from the political storm, and the poor who still needed to find food and medical care. (All of which sprang up from somewhere and were available at Walker Church.) Having New City in the building probably served to make it a bit more welcoming than just a bunch of old white homeowners, no matter how radical they used to be.

Walker’s problem to be solved in 2022 was almost purely financial. We had rental income, we had almost no debt. But our giving base was declining as members passed away or went into

long-term care or moved out of the area. New members came in but not fast enough. Instead of leaking money to the point of no return, the Walker congregation embarked on the Faithful Path, a program to discern the way forward. And that turned out to be giving our beloved building to New City Church but remaining there as a tenant. To add an extra layer of resilience, a new nonprofit was founded, the Grapevine Collective, with a board composed of representatives from Walker, New City, and community stakeholders. (See

grapevinecollective.org/community for a list of the current tenants of the building, which forms the collective.)

When the actual transfer of title occurs on July 1 of this year, the property will be transferred free of any debt. Walker Church will once again be a tenant, like in our wilderness years of 2012-13, but in a now-familiar setting. And New City, which was recently made a full-fledged UMC congregation, will be the church-owning rising star of the Methodist Conference. On July 16, Walker, New City, and Pas-

tor Tyler’s other church, Northeast United Methodist will have a combined Sunday celebration in the sanctuary. This will be followed by a huge community celebration, at which the building will be bestowed with a completely new name, in honor of its new status as an actual community center, which just happens to have two awesome churches in it. (I think it’s what the New Walker has wanted to be all along.) You’re all invited.

DFL, from page 1

good sign, I thought.

Ward 12 had four candidates vying for endorsement to run for the seat being vacated by Council Member Andrew Johnson, who is retiring at the end of this year. Luther Ranheim, a non-profit executive and neighborhood activist, and Nancy Ford, a small business owner and environmental activist, were both candidates (and will be on the ballot in November). They are both white and middle-aged and I don’t recall either of them having any endorsements. Jerome Evans is a known neighborhood activist, a queer, married, African American young man, endorsed by the DFL Senior Caucus and a couple of elected officials.

The front-runner going in was Aurin Chowdhury, who is currently a policy aide to Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez. She is a Twin Cities DSA member, and we endorsed her, along with three unions, two DFL caucuses, four advocacy groups, and ten elected officials. (Evans and Chowdhury agreed to abide by the endorsement and the other two did not. Evans has accordingly ended his campaign.) The rules committee had more anti-Chowdhury forces, and with four candidates, they wanted to use the old DFL playbook where you want to end the balloting early and prevent endorsement because your favored candidate doesn’t have a chance. Thus the “minority report.” This was an alternate rules document that returned to the usual practice of five ballots before a motion to adjourn was in order. The debate was intense, and kind of dirty. In the end, the minority report won out and was adopted – the first sign that Chowdhury’s support levels may have been underestimated.

The second sign was in the candidate speeches. Two candidates pretty much walked up there alone or with one other person and gave a speech, no demonstration, no signs. Ranheim at least had a fancy video and two speakers, one of which was his spouse. Chowdhury was preceded onto the stage by I am guessing upwards of 50 people in matching T-shirts, with signs and all the trimmings. A proper convention mini-rally.

Originally, I was strapped in for a long slog. But I was beginning to think there wouldn’t be

a lot of ballots as I marked and handed in my first one. More arguments about the rules. Pizza in the lobby. A prayer break. The chairperson was in the middle of trying to sort out another complex point of order or something when the head teller came in with results. And it was all over! Aurin Chowdhury won endorsement by a comfortable margin on the first ballot.

On Saturday, May 13, the Minneapolis DFL held the Ward 10 endorsing convention at Ella Baker School. There were only two candidates: incumbent Council Member Aisha Chughtai, who has also been endorsed by Twin Cities DSA, and former MPD Community Safety Officer Nasri Warsame, a relative newcomer to the local electoral scene.

With Chughtai’s side having what appeared to be a comfortable lead in pledged delegates, her campaign probably expected a fairly simple and stress-free convention. However, in hindsight, we can see that the Warsame campaign had an assumption from the start that the DFL deck was stacked against them. They didn’t have the numbers, and they didn’t have familiarity with the system and its rules. Perhaps understandably, at least in the case of the volunteers and supporters, they didn’t assume best intentions from the other side, nor from DFL officials running the show.

The convention was chaotic from the beginning. There were translation issues, with a lot of Warsame’s delegates being Somali elders and not proficient in English, and the DFL local units in the Twin Cities struggling to find enough reliable translators. More than half of the supporters for Warsame were not delegates, but “guests,” in convention terms. This volatile combination meant that there was a lot of misinformation, confusion and mistrust in the air.

After many hours of credential challenges and rules debate, it was time to hear speeches and take the first ballot. Warsame’s team was slated to speak second. As Chughtai’s supporters began to fill the stage to support her during her opening remarks, furious Warsame supporters swarmed the stage and physically confronted Chughtai supporters, leading to pushing, shouting, cursing and eventually some physical assaults. The con-

vention was forced to adjourn. (See the link below to a now-viral video of the outbreak.) The mayhem went on even after adjournment, and both paramedics and police were called, with Chughtai’s campaign team and some delegates taking shelter in a locked room until police could escort them from the building.

The chair of the DFL called an emergency meeting of the DFL State Executive Committee (SEC) to consider its response and how to move forward on the endorsement question. Two bylaw amendments were proposed, debated and passed that would allow the SEC to ban persons whom they deem to have violently disrupted the process for seeking endorsement, effectively an expulsion from the party. The SEC then provisionally banned Warsame from seeking DFL endorsement, which will have the effect of eliminating Chughtai’s only opposition for DFL endorsement if it stands. The DFL State Central Committee (SCC) will now vote on the two amendments and whether to sustain the banning of Warsame.

Whether the bylaws pass or not, it is unclear what the endorsement outcome will be at this point, as it could be Chughtai being endorsed or no endorsement, and that could (and most likely will) happen through a reconvened convention. It’s widely believed by observers that Chughtai had the necessary 60% threshold and more.

A third bylaw amendment was proposed at that SEC meeting. This one, called “Amendment 3” in the press coverage (which has been extensive) would bar members of other organizations that make endorsements prior to these conventions from volunteering at these events. The SEC was quite divided along ideological lines on this proposal, since both Twin Cities DSA and the DSC (which currently does not endorse candidates), were implicated by the Warsame campaign’s accusation of partiality.

The proposed bylaw amendment was referred to the DFL’s Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules Committee (CBRC). DSA members are far more impacted by this than by whether our endorsed candidate is also endorsed by the DFL. And, of course, none of this affects who is on the ballot, although it may impact who voters choose. But if

this Amendment 3 makes it into the DFL bylaws, it’s effectively a first step in the DFL calling for a Dirty Break from us. I guess a lot of moderates in the DFL are becoming really scared of socialists, and their increasing popularity with voters.

Addendum – on modern-day red-baiting

Forces within the DFL are definitely using this fear of socialism, especially prevalent in older generations who grew up under hysterical Cold War propaganda, as evidenced in this email I got from Tony Scallon and the Minneapolis DFL Senior Caucus:

(Excerpt)

“One of the candidates, Aurin Chowdhury, supported defunding police in the past. She has applied for the endorsement of the Twin Cities Democratic Socialists of America (TCDSA), a chapter of the national Democratic Socialists of America. In her application for TCDSA endorsement, Chowdhury has agreed to be: ‘... committed to building a “Socialists in Office” committee to coordinate with elected municipal officials and provide organizational support to build socialist power in the Twin Cities.’ She agreed to ‘... oppose increases to the current police budget.’”

Links:

Aurin Chowdhury for Ward 12 www.aurinchowdhury.org

Aisha Chughtai for Ward 10 www.aishaforward10.com

Nasri Warsame for Ward 10 nasriwarsame.com

Vets, from page 9

will of the people in the other breakaway provinces is more difficult to determine, although before the fall of democracy in Ukraine, polling showed that their sympathies were with Russia and not the West. It is their voice that needs to be heard in peace negotiations, their will that needs to be respected.

Their choices should not be

Video of turmoil at Ward 10 convention, from Twitter thread by WedgeLive (John Edwards)

youtu.be/KmqHr62uCVI

Statement by Aisha Chughtai aishaforward10.com/statements/statement-on-violence-perpetrated-by-nasri-warsame-campaign-at-ward-10-convention

Statement by Nasri Warsame tinyurl.com/28dmu5ek

Statement by Ken Martin, chair of the state DFL dfl.org/press-release/updated-dfl-party-statement-on-ward-10-convention

Addendum

BY ED FELIEN

Certainly one of the biggest shocks of this brief DFL endorsement season was the endorsement of Soren Stevenson over City Council President and African American transgender poet Andrea Jenkins. Stevenson lost an eye during the George Floyd protests as a result of the firing of an MPD blunt force projectile. He won 68% of the votes on the first ballot. “It’s clear that Ward 8 is ready for new leadership to bring about real transformational change,” Stevenson tweeted Saturday afternoon.

The Ward 2 DFL convention did not endorse a candidate – an obvious acknowledgement that incumbent Robin Wonsley, an independent leftist endorsed by DSA, was their best hope for continued progressive representation.

Jason Chavez won endorsement for re-election in Ward 9 by acclamation.

limited. They can choose to remain in Ukraine as they were before, they can remain in Ukraine as semi-autonomous republics, they can choose independence, or some form of association with Russia. The most daunting prospect for peace is regaining sufficient trust between the warring parties so that a free and fair referendum can be held.

An appeal for free legal advice

BY ED FELIEN

Attention dear friends in the Minneapolis legal community:

I hope you have the opportunity to read the following brief asking for injunctive relief from the District Court to compel the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and CenterPoint Energy to remove barriers that are artificially raising the level of Lake Hiawatha and justifying the closing of the Hiawatha 18-hole Golf Course. Hiawatha Golf Course was the home and origin of the Bronze Tournament—the first national tournament open to African Americans, a significant milepost in the struggle against racism.

If you agree with the basis for the brief, please help make it better. Please forward your suggestions and improvements to edfelien@southsidepride.com.

STATE OF MINNESOTA DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
CASE TYPE: CIVIL

Edwin Felien, Plaintiff
v.
Minneapolis Park and Recreation
Board and CenterPoint Energy, Defendants

MEMORANDUM OF INJUNCTIVE RELIEF TO SUPPORT THE REMOVAL OF OBSTACLES BLOCKING WATER LEAVING LAKE HIAWATHA

INTRODUCTION

On Friday, Oct. 14, 2022, Plaintiff, a property taxpayer in the City of Minneapolis wrote to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board:

“Hi Dawn,

“Would you direct this inquiry to Superintendent Bangoura and the MPRB Commissioners.

“Recent photos of the rock weir under the 30th Avenue footbridge [see attached photos] indicate clearly that the rock weir is the principal obstruction to the flow of water leaving Lake Hiawatha.

“As the Barr Engineering ‘Hiawatha Golf Course—Stormwater, Surface Water, and Groundwater Analysis Summary,’ February 28, 2017, said on page 25, ‘The existing control of water levels in Lake Hiawatha is either the high point in the channel upstream of 28th Avenue South or the rock weir under the pedestrian bridge at 30th Avenue South. The high point at 28th Avenue appears to be a gas main crossing the creek. The weir at 30th Avenue South appears to be manmade and its function is unknown.’

“Minnesota Statute 103G.141 PENALTIES. Subdivision 1. Misdemeanors: ‘a person is guilty of a misdemeanor who undertakes or procures another to undertake an alteration in the course, current, or cross section of public waters without previously obtaining a permit from the commissioner, regardless of whether the commissioner would have granted a permit had an application been filed.’

“By permitting the existence of the rock weir and by allowing CenterPoint Energy to obstruct the flow of water from Lake Hiawatha, thereby, according to estimates by Barr Engineering, raising the water level of Lake Hiawatha by one foot, the MPRB seems guilty of altering the cross section of public waters, and, therefore, guilty of violating Minnesota Statute 103G.141.

“Does the MPRB accept responsibility for raising the water level of Lake Hiawatha? Will they take measures to correct it?”

Hearing no response from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, I wrote again to Dawn Sommers:

“Oct. 21

“Hi Dawn,

“Did you pass my email on to staff and the Board?

“If I don’t hear from you by Monday, I will assume you have no interest in corresponding on the issue of the illegal damming of Minnehaha Creek, and I will pursue other options to correct violations of Minnesota Statute 103G.141.”

On Monday. 10/24/2022, 3:34 AM, I received this email:

“Ed,

“I passed your email on to Superintendent Bangoura and Assistant Superintendent of Planning Schroeder, and I was provided with the following details. Thank you for reminding me that you had also requested I share your email with commissioners; I will do so today.

‘According to Barr Engineering Company, this rock structure is one of 16 to 20 natural and introduced features in the creek, any one of which or all in combination have the ability to control the elevation of Lake Hiawatha. Removal of one, such as the CenterPoint Energy crossing, will not impact the elevation of the lake significantly. The most significant of the structures is a very large MCES sanitary sewer. The MPRB recognizes that you have consistently suggested this could be modified to allow the lake elevation to be lowered; however, Minneapolis Public Works has suggested it is not practicable.

‘The statute that you cite does not apply as the MPRB neither undertook nor procured another to put the rock structure in the creek. Moreover, the rock structure was previously the subject of a writ of mandamus you served upon the MPRB a few years ago. You suggested, by issuance of the writ, that the Park Board had a responsibility to remove it. The judge, however, found you had no standing to seek the writ and that even if you did, the MPRB had no duty to remove the rock from the creek. The writ was therefore dismissed.’

“Dawn Sommers
“Director, Communications and Marketing”

I wrote in response:

“Attention Superintendent Bangoura:

“You say there are ‘16 to 20 natural and introduced features in the creek’ that ‘control the elevation of Lake Hiawatha.’ I think that is a misrepresentation of the facts. The rock weir at 30th Avenue, the unused gas line pipe at 28th Avenue, the remnants of the dam/weir at 27th Avenue and the copious amounts of sand the City has dumped on the streets in the winter that flow through the storm sewer system to Minnehaha Creek are the principal obstructions blocking the exit of water from Lake Hiawatha. Park Board staff continue to count the MCES and City sanitary sewer pipes as part of the obstruction, but the MCES Interceptor pipe is eight feet below ground level and the City sanitary pipes are six feet below the ground. According to sources in Minneapolis Public Works, they have to be at least six feet below the surface to avoid freezing and bursting.

“Judge Patrick D. Robben, in his Order Denying my Petition for a Writ of Mandamus said, ‘Petitioner cites no specific legal duty--be it statute, rule or regulation--that requires the Park Board to remove the rocks from Minnehaha Creek or pump a certain amount of groundwater out of Hiawatha Golf Course. At best, Petitioner represents that the Park Board has an overarching duty to protect the public welfare. Such an overarching aspirational goal--akin to ‘do the right thing’ or Google’s corporate conduct motto ‘don’t be evil’ - is not the same thing as a specific and clearly imposed legal duty for which the Court could, through a writ of mandamus, direct the Park Board as to how to carry out its duties.’ I believe the stipulations of Minnesota Statute 103G.141 offer ‘a specific and clearly imposed legal duty for which the Court could, through a writ of mandamus, direct the Park Board as to how to carry out its duties.’

“According to the stated mission of the Park Board, ‘The Minne-

apolis Park and Recreation Board permanently preserves, protects, maintains, improves, and enhances its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations of our region including people, plants and wildlife.’ Removing the unnatural obstructions to the flow of water out of Lake Hiawatha will substantially lower the level of Lake Hiawatha and reduce the flooding of the natural wetland and cease ‘altering the cross section of publicwaters.’

“The parks of Minneapolis are a great gift from previous generations. We have a responsibility to future generations to be responsible stewards of our inheritance.”

A week later I wrote to the Park Board:

“Dear Superintendent Bangoura,

“May I assume you have verified the depth of the sanitary pipes running under Minnehaha Creek?

“May I assume you have discussed Park Board liability with regard to Minnesota Statute 103G.141 with legal staff?

“May I then hope to hear from you by Friday of this week, November 4, about an understanding of MPRB’s responsibility for and a commitment to a calendar for removal of obstructions that block the exit of water from Lake Hiawatha through Minnehaha Creek?

“Thank you for your kind attention to these matters.”

On 11/7/2022, I wrote:

“Dear Superintendent Bangoura,

“I was disappointed not to hear from you last week about the obstructions in Minnehaha Creek that are flooding the wetlands around Lake Hiawatha and now, Lake Nokomis. If I do not hear from you this week, I will assume you wish to settle the matter in court—an expensive and burdensome alternative.”

On 11/8 I received this:

“Hello Mr. Felien,

“Thank you for your email; we are looking into this.

“Respectfully,
“Al”

I responded 10 days later on 11/18:

“Hello Al,

“Thank you for your email of November 8 in which you say you are ‘looking into’ the artificial obstructions that are blocking the flow of water out of Lake Hiawatha.

“May I assume, by now, your legal department has verified that there is a Minnesota Statute 103G.141 that prohibits the artificial raising of the level of public lake and, thereby, the flooding a wetland.

“May I further assume you understand the Park Board has the legal responsibility to remove those artificial obstructions.

“Removal of the stone weir under the 30th Avenue footbridge would require directing the Environmental Stewardship Division to send a crew out some day next spring to remove the rocks.

“Removal of the unused gas line would require you asking your legal department to write CenterPoint and inform them of the law and their responsibility to remove the pipe.

“Removal of remnants of the dam/weir at 27th Avenue, the least significant obstruction, according to the MPRB 2017 study by Barr Engineering, might require contracting with an independent construction firm to deconstruct the structure.

Southside Pride / NEIGHBORHOOD EDITION

"May I have your assurance that we agree on our understanding of the law?

"May I have your assurance that we agree on remedies to resolve the problem?

"I sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter,

"Respectfully,"

The final email I received from the Park Board:

"Mr. Felien:

"Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

"No, you may not make assumptions on my behalf.

"Thank you for your email.
"Al Bangoura"

I wrote a final letter to the Park Board:

"Superintendent Bangoura,

"My humble understanding of the legal process is that we are involved in the first phase: Discovery.

"I have written to you expressing my concern that the MPRB is in violation of Minnesota Statute 103G.141 and guilty of a misdemeanor by allowing artificial obstructions to stop the flow of water out of Lake Hiawatha, thereby raising the level of the lake and flooding the surrounding wetlands.

"My hope was that we could agree to these simple remedies: remove the rocks; tell CenterPoint to remove their pipe; and get bids on removal of the remains of the dam/weir.

"That is my understanding of the Park Board's responsibilities under the law and my hopes for restoration of Minnehaha Creek and Lake Hiawatha. That will be the extent of my brief in my appeal to Judge Patrick D. Robben to reverse his Order Denying my Petition for a Writ of Mandamus.

"In the hope we can avoid a court date, as the Plaintiff, I have shared my complaint.

"It is customary at this point, after the Plaintiff has shared their brief, to ask the defendant, 'What is your answer?'"

I received no reply.

I wrote the Minneapolis City Attorney in the hope she would enforce Minnesota Statute 103G.141:

"Dear Kristyn Anderson, City Attorney:

"Is the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in violation of Minnesota Statute 103G.141 by obstructing the flow of water out of Lake Hiawatha?

"As the Barr Engineering "Hiawatha Golf Course—Stormwater, Surface Water, and Groundwater Analysis Summary," February 28, 2017, said on page 25, 'The existing controls of water levels in Lake Hiawatha is either the high point in the channel upstream of 28th Avenue South or the rock weir under the pedestrian bridge at 30th Avenue South. The high point at 28th Avenue appears to be a gas main crossing the creek. The weir at 30th Avenue South appears to be manmade and its function is unknown.'

"Minnesota Statute 103G.141 PENALTIES. Subdivision 1. Misdemeanors: 'a person is guilty of a misdemeanor who undertakes or procures another to undertake an alteration in the course, current, or cross section of public waters without previously obtaining a permit from the commissioner, regardless of whether the commissioner would have granted a permit had an application been filed.'

"By permitting the existence of the rock weir and by allowing CenterPoint Energy to obstruct the flow of water from Lake Hiawatha, thereby, according to estimates by Barr Engineering, raising the water level of Lake Hiawatha by one foot, the MPRB seems guilty of altering the cross section of public waters, and, therefore, guilty of violating Minnesota Statute 103G.141.

"What remedies does the City of Minneapolis have to compel the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to follow the law and remove those barriers?

"Thank you very much for your attention to this matter."

I received no response.

I wrote to the president of the Minneapolis City Council, attaching the above email sent to the City Attorney:

"Council President Andrea Jenkins,

"I wrote to the Minneapolis City Attorney on January 16 to complain that the Park Board is in violation of State law by allowing artificial impediments to block the flow of water out of Lake Hiawatha. This blockage floods the natural wetlands surrounding Hiawatha Golf Course, and this consequent flooding is used by the Park Board to justify closing the 18-hole golf course that has profound cultural significance to the African American community of South Minneapolis.

"Would you kindly remind our City Attorney that it is her responsibility to enforce Minnesota laws and prosecute misdemeanors.

"Here is the email I sent:"

I have received no response.

CONCLUSION

This is a matter of some urgency. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has determined to stop or reduce pumping ground water out of the wetlands surrounding Lake Hiawatha, thereby flooding Hiawatha Golf Course—a culturally and socially significant institution for the South Minneapolis African American community. They justify their action by claiming this would be a more "natural" condition, when a significant reason for the flooding is the "unnatural" stone weir and an "unnatural" unused gas line that they refuse to mitigate.

I have exhausted all nonjudicial remedies, therefore, I implore this Court to order the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to remove the stone weir at the 30th Avenue pedestrian bridge across Minnehaha Creek and to order CenterPoint Energy to remove their unused utility pipe near the 28th Avenue bridge.

Respectfully submitted
Edwin Felien

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Open Streets’ first event on East Lake Street means that summer has truly begun

BY STEPHANIE FOX

Summer means Minnesotans finally come out of hiding and head out into the streets, flocking to outdoor celebrations. The first Open Streets, scheduled for Saturday, June 10, is expected to bring Twin Citizens to East Lake Street to enjoy the crowds and the sunny weather.

This is a free, family-friendly event. No cars are allowed, but bring your dogs, and walk, ride your bike, and skate or skateboard down Lake Street between 2nd Avenue and 22nd Avenue from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Open Streets began as a way to expand the community imagination beyond car-centric street design, said Ember Rasmussen,

Open Street’s community development and events manager. “The events are a small spark of what our city could look like if we centered people and community first,” Rasmussen said.

Along the 10-plus blocks of the usually busy vehicle corridor, 200 contributors will offer performances, feature arts and crafts, and serve food from trucks and booths. Political and social groups will be there as well. Maps are available at the Open Streets booth and from volunteers stationed along the route.

Jawaahir Dance Company

Laura Crocker has been a member of the Jawaahir Dance Company for 16 years. Translated as “jewels” in Arabic, Jawaahir focuses on traditional styles of Middle Eastern dance, often called belly dance. The 15-member troupe will be on stage at the corner of Lake Street and Elliot Avenue. “We’ll be focusing on the traditional dance style of Egypt,” said Crocker.

This is the first year for the dance company to move from local indoor theater stages to the outdoor venue of Open Streets.

“Like a lot of arts organizations, there’s been a lot of change during the past couple of years,” Crocker said. “We want to get out and interact with the community. We want people to stop by, because there will be earthy and exciting music and dance styles you don’t see every day in Minnesota.”

Queerhaven Art Collective

The Queerhaven Art Collective’s artists will be selling prints, cards, stickers and T-shirts. And again this year the group will offer an area where even non-artists can express themselves with chalk art.

“My art is whimsical advocacy,” said artist Andrea From, who is nonbinary. “I have a background in comic art. I’ve always been drawn to visual story telling. I like transparency and bright colors, adding layers to the work.”

This is From’s second year at Open Streets on East Lake. “It’s super fun. I got to meet some neighbors I’d not met before and reconnect with those I knew,” they said.

Other artists will be joining Queerhaven, offering artistic media including needlepoint and acrylic pours, a technique where pouring paint lets the artist create patterns.

“Open Streets is important,” From said. “My partner is a cyclist. My kids like to ride bikes. This event brings communities together and helps envision a city that has more public transit. It includes everyone, and other queer artists feel very comfortable there, surrounded by our community.”



‘Rainbow Goddess’ by Andrea Alice From, of the Queerhaven Art Collective





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A Civil War-era gravestone from the Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery



A tree takes a stroll at Open Streets East Lake in 2018 (Photo/Fibonacci Blue)



Chalk, bubbles and a popsicle at Open Streets East Lake in 2018 (Photo/Fibonacci Blue)

Corazon Mexicano

Corazon Mexicano, a Mexican arts and crafts store on Lake Street, sells a variety of gifts inspired by the Mexican southeast and Mayan culture. Owner Anna Del Rivero's shop is a multi-generational family business, started by her father in Mexico.

Their booth at Open Streets will feature jewelry, crafts, hand-painted art, T-shirts and handmade Mayan-style clothing. Del Rivero opened her Lake Street shop to share her culture with others. That's what brings her family to Open Streets for a second year. "I get to meet people and show a little of Mexico," she said.

The family includes Del Rivero's daughter Anna. "We all work together as a family, artists here in Minnesota and in Mexico," she said. "We hope to welcome a lot of people to our booth and will be happy to answer questions about our shop's merchandise and about our culture."

Friends of the Cemetery

Driving down Lake Street, it's easy to ignore the cemetery on the northeast corner of Lake and Cedar. Many think it's simply an historic curiosity, but Susan Hunter Weir knows better and hopes to show that the Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery is much more.

The cemetery, at 2945 Cedar Ave., was founded in 1853. It closed in 1919 and then reopened in the 1930s to bury the widow of a Civil War veteran. The last burial was in 2021. History, Weir said, lives on. There are 22,000 people buried there. And, unlike many cemeteries, it was never segregated.

"You know this is a Minnesota cemetery," Weir said. "There are 1,035 people buried there named Johnson and 823 named Anderson."

During Open Streets, volunteers will be at the cemetery gate to give mini-tours and answers questions. And a woman re-enactor, dressed in a hoopskirt, will entertain the children with 19th-century toys and games. "We have one game where they drop clothespins into a bottle and one where they 'fish' with a fishing pole with a magnet and little metal fish to win a prize," said Weir.

"People tell me that they drive past but never go in," said Weir. "At Open Streets, they can."

Eastlake Craft Brewery

The Eastlake Craft Brewery, inside the Midtown Global Market, will be serving their award-winning beers and other beverages on their patio. People can enjoy drinks and bring food from the restaurants inside the market.

"It was decided that we need to dial back our Open Streets presence this summer because we will have key members of staff gone that day, me included," said Davin Haukebo-Bol, who organizes events and outreach for the brewery. "I am bummed because I love this event."

They were hoping to include a Scandinavian lawn game, Viking Chess, Haukebo-Bol said, where "we throw blocks of wood at each other." Maybe next year.

Friendly bartenders will serve friendly beverages, including a variety of award-winning light lagers, sour and hop-forward beers. But there are options for non-drinkers, too, including non-alcoholic beers, kombucha, root beer, ginger beer and bubbly waters in various flavors. And thanks to recent legislation, THC seltzers with 5 mg of THC but no calories will also be available.

Open Streets has become an important tradition in Minneapolis, said Open Streets events manager Rasmussen. "The family-friendly events are celebrations of the



Jawaahir Dance Company performers (Photo/Blue Diamond Photography, courtesy of Jawaahir Dance Company)

unique neighborhoods and cultures that make our city great. On East Lake Street, food vendors, community partners, musicians, performers, local makers and thousands of residents from the surrounding neighborhoods will all join the party on three joyful miles of city street."

Look for more Open Streets events throughout the summer and fall, held on different thoroughfares, including Glenwood, Cedar, West Broadway and Lynedale Avenues, one each month through October.



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