



# East Village

## Magazine

April 2024

Photograph By

*Edwin D. Carter*



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## Commentary *Recall the Flint City Council?* *But at what cost?*

*By Paul Rozycki*

**W**ithin the last year, all but one elected Flint City Council member has faced the possibility of a recall.

The late Councilman Eric Mays (Ward 1) saw two recall petitions approved for circulation before he died in February, Council President Ladel Lewis (Ward 2) is currently navigating a fourth recall attempt in a little over six months, and Councilmembers Quincy Murphy (Ward 3), Judy Priestley (Ward 4), Jerri Winfrey-Carter (Ward 5), former Council President Allie Herkenroder (Ward 7), Dennis Pfeiffer (Ward 8) and Eva Worthing (Ward 9) have all had at least one petition attempt filed against them.

So far, only a petition to recall Worthing has proven successful. The 9th Ward councilwoman decided not to run to keep her seat, so Page Brouseau, Kathryn Irwin, and Jonathan Jarrett are vying for the position in a recall election on May 7. (Interviews with those candidates can be found on page 7 of this issue.)

There are multiple reasons why the past year’s many city council recall attempts were not successful. Herkenroder resigned from her post before petition signatures were returned, for example, while others failed due to an insufficient number of valid signatures or a petitioner’s reason for the recall not being deemed “clear and factual” by the Genesee County Election Commission.

Ultimately though, whoever is or isn’t actually removed from office, the process of recalling the majority of Flint City Council presents a significant problem and expense for

local officials, local governments, and taxpayers.

### The costs and challenges of many recalls

Recall elections are under the direction of the Genesee County Clerk’s office and the Genesee County Election Commission, composed of county Clerk/Registrar Domonique Clemons, county Probate Judge Jenny Barkey, and county Treasurer Deb Cherry.

They must meet to approve the initial language of the recall petitions, along with properly posting those outcomes. From there, signatures must be gathered and verified, elections must be scheduled and ballots prepared.

That’s not to mention the work of the Election Division of Flint’s City Clerk Office, which aids in signature verification, manages candidate applications, and conducts the city’s elections, as well.

Clearly, it takes a great deal of time and effort on the part of local officials to manage recalls, and local governments (and thereby taxpayers) bear the cost.

“The recall process is a very involved process and is very intensive. While it requires a lot of labor and passion for any resident to go through the recall process, it is also extremely timely and costly for municipal government,” Clemons told East Village Magazine in an email. “The rise in recall attempts has required my staff to put in additional hours and overtime to meet our deadlines for the recalls, on top of the hundreds

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**Cover:** A view of Brookwood Drive in Flint, Mich. on March 6, 2024.

*(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)*



**Photo of the Month:** Winter’s end pruning of a Burr Oak in an Avon Street backyard in Flint on Feb. 26, 2024.  
(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

## ***Global Flint Initiative: ‘making Flint a welcoming and engaging community’***

***By Harold C. Ford***

*“Immigrants are a breath of fresh air.”*

*– Jennifer Alvey, University of Michigan-Flint, March 5, 2024*

On Tuesday, March 5 a diverse group of more than 40 people from the Flint area gathered at the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library to launch the Global Flint Initiative (GFI), a cross-organizational effort to make the city “a welcoming community” to immigrants.

“It’s really important work that we are all embarking on ... being a welcoming community,” Jim Ananich, vice president of GFI and former state legislator, said in his opening remarks. “One, it shows our values, but it also is good for our community in a number of ways.”

“We have a mission and that is to focus on attracting and retaining non-native foreign residents,” added Phyllis Sykes, the initiative’s president and executive director of the International Center of Greater Flint.

Sykes added that GFI is first focused on determining the needs of Flint’s non-native population, so over the next several months the initiative will collect information from surveys, focus

groups, and interviews to “ascertain what the needs are so that we can come up with a strategic plan on how to address those needs, thereby making Flint a welcoming and engaging community.”

Organizations represented at the event included: Greater Flint Arts Council, Latinx Technology & Community Center; Mass Transportation Authority; Michigan Works! Association; Flint & Genesee County Chamber; Huntington Bank; and the South Side Community Coalition.

Additionally, participants from two of Flint’s major institutions of higher learning – University of Michigan-Flint, and Kettering University – played leadership roles in the nearly 90-minute meeting. A representative from Mott Community College was also present.

### **“An image problem”**

Overshadowing the effort, perhaps, to craft and implement a strategic

plan is the wider public’s perception of Flint, Sykes and other officials noted.

Sykes illustrated that challenge during her introduction of four Kettering graduate students who self-identified themselves for East Village Magazine (EVM) as: Mukhesh Sivakumar from India; Raquibul Islam from Bangladesh; and Sameer B. and Vivek C., both from India.

Sykes said that when Islam arrived in Michigan at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, an Uber driver “warned him about coming to Flint” saying something along the lines of, “Beware, you don’t want to go to Flint ... Whatever you do, don’t go outside.”

The warning led Islam to secure housing in the Detroit area and commute daily to and from Flint in order to attend Kettering.

“We have a major P.R. [public relations] problem here in Flint,” Sykes said. “Unfortunately, we’re dealing with an image problem that Flint has

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## Global Flint ...

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that hinders us from being a welcoming community.”

### Needs assessment and next steps

As part of determining the needs of Flint’s current and potential nonnative population, March 5 participants were divided into four groups that brainstormed issues related to government and business, health and education, faith-based needs, and immigrant services.



**Phyllis Sykes, president of the Global Flint Initiative, speaks during a launch event for the initiative on March 5, 2024 at the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library.**

(Photo by Harold Ford)

The brainstorming groups were facilitated by faculty representatives from local universities: Kettering’s Ken Williams and the University of Michigan-Flint’s Jennifer Alvey, Sasha Drummond, and Emily Feuerherm.

Feuerherm urged participants to consider the needs of four categories of

foreign-born populations:

- Refugees, defined by Feuerherm as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted.”
- Asylum-seekers, or those looking for “international protection but [that] haven’t gone through all of the process for becoming a refugee.”
- International students who “enter the U.S. with a visa [and] are required to leave after their studies are done.”
- And immigrants, which she used as a “catch-all” term to “include refugees, asylum-seekers, and international students.”

During report-outs following the group sessions, Feuerherm noted commonalities in participants’ feedback.

“What we have found is that there are challenges that each of the four populations have,” she said.

The common challenges, Feuerherm continued, include “language barriers; employment restrictions; legal documentation challenges; access to health care; housing and food insecurity; access to social services; educational challenges; discrimination, prejudice, stigmatization; detention, family separation; financial struggles; trauma, mental health; community social integration; changes in immigration policy, fear of deportation; and cultural adjustments.”

Williams, who led the health and education group, also noted similarities, but cautioned that, “Although there are common challenges, there are unique challenges within those four [aforementioned] groups... We’re probably going to see some challenges that are unique

in the Flint community that are not necessarily nationwide.”

According to GFI’s organizers, during the coming spring and summer months, they will also be reaching out to Flint’s native-born populations for their input.



**Dr. Ken Williams of Kettering University speaks during a launch event for the Global Flint Initiative on March 5, 2024 at the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library.**

(Photo by Harold Ford)

“We’d like to get more specific and locally identify what specific needs exist in Flint,” Drummond said. “We’ll be meeting people where they are.”

Sykes said that support for the GFI initiative came from the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, Michigan State University, the Flint-based Salem Housing Community Development Corporation, and the Detroit-based Austin Foundation.

GFI leaders said they expect to reconvene a community meeting in the fall of 2024, when they will share the results of their research and a strategic plan for the initiative’s future. ●

# SEEKING WRITERS

East Village Magazine is searching for community journalists! Ideal candidates are curious, engaged Flint residents who want to help keep their neighbors informed of the local news that affects them most. EVM writers receive free training, story writing and editing support, and payment for each published story. (We also have pretty great snacks at our monthly writers meetings.) If you’re interested in getting involved, please email us at [eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com](mailto:eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com) with the subject line “Community Journalist.”

# Former Flint golf course to be transformed in \$1.4 million undertaking

By Kate Stockrahm

Pierce Park is preparing for a major transformation in late summer, including introducing wetlands, meadows, reforestation, and accessibility paths to the 67-acre former golf course.

Bounded by Interstate-69, Dort Highway, Gilkey Creek, and residences on the south side of Flint's College Cultural neighborhood, the park has lived a host of lives since it was donated to the City of Flint by the Pierce family in the 1940s.

"It's got a restricted deed," explained Pierce Park Nature Preserve (PPNP) president Mike Keeler on a sunny afternoon walk around the park. "It says it will remain in the city's property as long as it remains for recreation."

Keeler said he believed Flint administrators decided to turn the site into an 18-hole golf course in the 1960s.

"At one point in time before the oil embargo, which was the mid-70s, this park used to be lit during the summer, and you could play golf all night long if you really wanted to," Keeler said, smiling.

He noted that the site was also a former location for Flint Junior Golf, and many area residents recall the park as where they learned to play.

"This became a senior center, too," Keeler added, pointing to a now-vacant plot that used to sport the golf course's clubhouse. The building burned in September 2020, though it had already been shuttered in 2012 during Flint's emergency management.

But all that is in the past, and Keeler and his team are solidly looking toward the park's future following the procurement of a \$815,700 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife

Foundation.

While Keeler said he and his wife, Sherry, are no strangers to completing grant applications for PPNP's work, he pointed to Michigan State University Landscape Architecture

areas of the park – and hopefully spur on much more investment.

"Eventually we're thinking there'll be a handicap accessible area that will come out to here," he said, stopping at the top of a raised section of earth in the middle of the park, overlooking what will become acres of wetland. "And that one will be paved."

The project team includes Natural Community Services, LLC, an ecology firm specializing in restoring natural areas in former golf courses, and Landscape Architects and Planners, LLC, which will work with government agencies to ensure best management practices as the project moves forward.

Continuing on the walk, Keeler explained how the wetland portion of the project will attract more wildlife to the area, create more scenic views for visitors, and help alleviate flooding for the surrounding neighborhood.

"There's a number of [park neighbors] that are paying extra money for flood insurance," he said, citing conversations he's had as PPNP president and as president of the College Cultural Neighborhood Association. "We've talked to a couple of them, and they're just real happy."

The overall plan will also see the park's current nearly two miles of trail expanded and moved to dryer areas for improved walking, running, or biking experiences.

Keeler said he expects bulldozers out in late summer, perhaps August or September of this year, and that the work will wrap up in December 2026, when PPNP's funding, which also includes a \$50,000 American Rescue



**A sunny afternoon at Pierce Park Nature Preserve in Flint, Mich. on March 21, 2024.**

(Photo by Kate Stockrahm)



**The remnants of Pierce Park's former golf course clubhouse building in April 2021. The clubhouse, which also served as a senior center before its closure, caught fire in September 2020.**

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

faculty Dr. Wonmin Sohn and Dr. Jun-Hyun Kim as the team who secured this funding, which PPNP plans to match with \$324,000 from its own fundraising efforts.

Keeler explained the money will be used to develop 12 acres of wetlands, seven culvert improvements, nine acres of prairie restoration, six acres of reforestation – mainly along the noisy Dort Highway

(Continued on Page 11)

# Meet the candidates running for the 9th Ward Flint City Council seat

By EVM Staff

A recall election for Flint’s 9th Ward City Council seat will be held on Tuesday, May 7, 2024.

With incumbent Councilwoman Eva Worthing electing not to run in the recall, three candidates are vying for 9th Ward residents’ votes next month: Page Brousseau, Kathryn Irwin, and Jonathan Jarrett.

To get to know each candidate a bit better, East Village Magazine (EVM) asked all three the same five questions. Here’s what they had to say about the needs of the ward they call home and why they’re the best person for the council job.

## *What do you see as the top three issues facing Flint’s 9th Ward?*

**BROUSSEAU:** The three top issues facing the 9th Ward are blight elimination, business development, particularly along Dort Highway and Fenton Road, and ARPA money distribution: ensuring responsible distribution across the city and making sure dollars support efforts in the 9th Ward.

**IRWIN:** Blight, crime, blight

**JARRETT:** In speaking with constituents, variations of blight make up the top three issues: Vacant properties; Illegal parking/car storage; and Hoarding.

## *How would you go about addressing those three issues if elected to Flint City Council?*

**BROUSSEAU:** The first step is to make the City Council a place where the city’s business can be handled with maturity and

thoughtfulness. Second, the Council must work together with the Mayor’s office to create conditions for businesses and residents to relocate to Flint and remain within the city.

Blight and crime are major factors influencing decision-making when people and businesses establish roots. ARPA spending must be transparent, with every dollar directed before the Council approves the spending.

**IRWIN:** The best thing we can do is work on blight to keep residents here. We need clean, safe neighborhoods because people looking to buy a home they can afford don’t want boarded up or burned out properties next to them. We need to work with police to find a way to up neighborhood patrols.

**JARRETT:** We are hopeful the vacant properties at issue are on the demolition list for which Genesee County Land Bank received a City of Flint ARPA Funds allocation. Illegal parking/car storage and hoarding, which create safety and rodent concerns respectively, can be resolved in partnership with Neighborhood Safety Officers by making them aware of addresses where enforcement is needed.

## *Many Flint residents have noted division and incivility among current city council members.*

### *How would you work to address that?*

**BROUSSEAU:** My contribution to the City Council would be representing the 9th Ward civilly and professionally. I pledge

to respond to residents, city staff, and my colleagues in a professional demeanor that supports the desired level of decorum.

I respect everyone on the Council and the constituents who sent them there. I will hear all sides of every argument, promise to be fair, and work with anyone on the Council who is working to improve the quality of life for all in Flint.

**IRWIN:** Calmly. [In] all jobs I have had [including bartending and hairdressing], I have had to deal with all personalities and diffusing many different situations. I hope to do that at council.

**JARRETT:** Maintaining civility is an individual choice. I choose to model acceptance, recognizing there are other views and perspectives outside of my own. I choose to show myself to be tolerant where tolerance is needed; I choose to be a leader where leadership is needed; and I choose to be respectful in all situations.

## *U.S. Census data shows that Flint lost around 20% of its population in the last census. What is your plan for addressing the vacant and blighted properties that loss has left behind — both in the 9th Ward and across the city?*

**BROUSSEAU:** The city must work with Federal and State agencies to eliminate blight. Property owners must be held accountable for their properties when they fail to abide by city ordinances. Working with the Land Bank and the public, current residents should be encouraged to

*(Continued on Page 11)*



**Page Brousseau**  
(Photo Courtesy Page Brousseau)



**Kathryn Irwin**  
(Photo Courtesy Kathryn Irwin)



**Jonathan Jarrett**  
(Photo Courtesy Jonathan Jarrett)

# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of April 1. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our May issue, email info about your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com) by April 20.

## From Her Perspective:

### Intersections of Gender and Race

Now - Aug. 24

A new exhibition of paintings, photography, sculpture, and works on paper by artists who explore Blackness, womanhood, and the female experience through their art.

MW Gallery

815 S. Saginaw St., Flint

### 2024 Solar Eclipse

Mon. April 8, noon to 5 p.m.

Solar eclipse won't occur for another 20 years! This is a free event eclipse viewing glasses, \$2/pair.

Longway Planetarium

1221 E. Kearsley Street

For more info visit [sloanongway.org](http://sloanongway.org)

or call 810-237-3443.

### The Spring Sinister Swap Meet

Sat., April 13, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The Flint Monster Society presents a day of freaky fun vendors including art, books, movies, crafts tarot reading and more.

Free for all ages.

Flint Local 432

124 W. 1st St., Flint

For more info call 810-285-1748

### St. Cecilia Music Series

Sun., April 14, 2 p.m.

Tribute to Delaina Oberman, featuring her former percussion students and other performers who won awards at our Student Awards Audition.

Also in St. Cecilia's Series...

Sun., May 5, 2 p.m.

Kim Streby, soprano, Richard Kerry

Thompson, tenor, and Octogenarians:

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soprano, Robert Hoag, baritone, and Larry

MacDonald, piano.

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MacArthur Hall at the FIM

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### Outdoor Explorers: No More Pollution!

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### "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Fri., April 19, 7:30 p.m.

This film follows The Shakespeare Behind Bars troupe at Luther Lockett Correctional Facility. Troupe director Curt Tofteland, guides the inmates who cast themselves in roles reflecting their actual lives interwoven with "The Tempest," resulting in a story about the creative process

and the power of art to heal.

Tickets: \$25 with a 30% discount for Genesee County residents.

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### Used Book Sale sponsored by Friends of the Flint Public Library

Preview sale for members of "Friends" on May 2, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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Ed Custer's East Village Magazine logo is reimaged for each issue by Patsy Isenberg.



## **Rozycki commentary ...**

*(Continued from Page 3)*

of process deadlines we also have for a major election year such as 2024. A local recall (City of Flint for example) requires efforts of both my office and the [Flint] city clerk...Between myself, my staff, our GIS [Geographic Information Systems] Department, and corporate counsel it is easy to estimate between an additional 30-60 hours is needed for each recall submitted (not counting any city time).”

Clemons also noted all of that time doesn't account for the additional hours then required to properly notice an approved recall, program and print ballots, and conduct the election when a recall is approved.

“Each recall is also costing the community (through tax dollars) thousands of dollars,” Clemons summarized. “The recall process is an incredibly timely and costly process for election offices, who must meet the requirements of recalls along with an already grueling schedule, all at the taxpayers' expense.”

### **What limits recalls?**

It's a maxim that in a democratic nation we should have the right to elect our government officials. Nationwide we elect over 500,000 individuals to office from the president of the United States to local school board members and township clerks, and perhaps a few dog-catchers here and there. That right is the core of a democratic society. But how far should that extend? Should the voters also have the right to remove any elected official, for any reason, and if so, when and how should it be done? What limits should there be?

Clearly, a recall may be justified if an official is convicted of a serious crime or is unable or unwilling to perform the basic duties of their job. But it should not be used simply because one official disagrees with another, belongs to a different party, or votes against you.

Some 39 states allow for a recall

of local officials, and 19 have provisions to recall state level officials. In a dozen states recalls are allowed for only a few specified reasons, like a criminal conviction.

In Michigan the only requirement is that the reasons for the recall must be “clear and factual,” and all state and local officials are subject to a recall except judges.

### **Changes in Michigan's recall law**

Recalls in Michigan used to be easier and more common.

Before a change in the law a little over a decade ago, it seemed like you couldn't go a month in Genesee County without someone trying to recall a local official for one reason or another — or perhaps no real reason at all, except that they didn't like the individual.

To reduce the number of recalls the state tightened the rules for recalls in 2012.

Depending on the office, recalls couldn't take place at the very beginning or end of one's term of office. The timeline for collecting signatures was reduced from 90 to 60 days, and the reasons for the recall must be deemed both “clear and factual.” Further, recall petitions needed to be signed by voters equal to 25% of those who voted for governor in that district.

In general the rules worked, and the number of recalls dropped significantly. But not for the Flint City Council.

Yet all these Flint recalls do place a burden on local election officials who are already trying to adjust to the expanded election options for this year. So what should be done?

### **A few possible solutions**

On one hand, Michigan could get rid of recalls altogether. There are eleven states that don't allow them, but certainly there are cases where an officeholder is clearly unable or unwilling to perform his or her basic duties where a recall would be justified.

A second solution would be to tighten up the reasons for a recall.

Instead of simply saying the reasons for a recall must be “clear and factual,” the law might specify more particular, narrowly defined cases where a recall is an option, such as in instances of neglect of duty or criminal conviction. About a dozen states, including Georgia, Florida, Kansas, Montana and Minnesota, apply these limits to their recalls.

Yet, while those are both possible options, perhaps the real solution doesn't rest with the details of a recall law but in our attitudes and those of our officeholders.

The real solution would be to recognize that democracy works best when people of differing opinions can disagree, do so in a civil way, and still work together to reach some sensible solutions.

What we are seeing with the Flint City Council recalls is a reflection of the deep partisan division nationwide, where the other side is not only different but is considered “the enemy.” The current U.S. Congress is an obvious example.

Certainly there may be times when a recall is justified, but recalling someone because they missed a meeting, said something you didn't like, or voted the wrong way on a bill is not the way to get things done and not the way to keep democracy functioning. The endless recalls also undermine the basic trust in all governmental institutions.

I often think that our elected officials could learn something from most high school and college athletic teams. After the big game is done, no matter how hard they tackled, blocked, or fouled each other, both the winning and the losing teams line up and shake hands with each other before they retreat to the locker room. After all, they realize there is another game next week.

Maybe we should realize that there is another regular election next month or next year as well, and that recalls should be the rare exception — not the standard way of getting back at those who disagree with you. ●

## Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 12)

and making the baby cry, I determined to quit my job of Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering and look for something dangerous.”

And then, my instant favorite, *Bomba, the Jungle Boy, or, the Old Naturalist's Secret*, copyright 1926, by Roy Rockwood. In its fourth paragraph lies this delicious sentence, “From a distance came the screams of parrots and the howling of monkeys, but otherwise the jungle was silent.”

Finally, a white cigar box which once held 50 Very Mild Class E Geronimo Sports. Disappointed to find it empty, I nonetheless realize it's a piece of history. Its label says “Spaniola's Pipe and Tobacco Company, 647 S. Saginaw, Phone CE 3-9389.”

And I know that shop is still there – Paul Spaniola is 94, a downtown survivor, and according to his daughter, he still comes in occasionally for a few hours' work. Dan, his son, runs the store, and you still could buy a sweet cigar any day from Paul's Pipe Shop if you wanted to. The phone number, though, is an old one.

My visit to my attic has yielded a major cache. Happily, but gingerly, I go down on my derriere on each of the ladder's narrow rungs, the books and cigar box in my arms. This is what attics

are for – another story in the house, and within it, more stories to tell.

Bachelard undoubtedly would be pleased. ●

*Editor's note: Paul Spaniola died on Aug. 27, 2013. He was 100 years old. His son, Dan, continues to run the shop at 647 S. Saginaw. Jan told EVM she still has her Tongan bowl and high school yearbooks, but she has no idea what she did with that “self-immolating letter.”*



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Three-bedroom two story apartment. Features hardwood floors, appliances, 1 1/2 baths, laundry, garden plot, off street fenced parking. In the center of it all on cul-de-sac Avon near Kearsley St. Walk three blocks or less to UM-F, MCC, Cultural Center, parks, Downtown. References and credit check requested. On site management. \$895 per month plus all utilities. No pets. E-mail: [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write: Apartment Box 9, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.

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## park renewal ...

(Continued from Page 6)

Plan Act grant from the City of Flint, must be expended.

As Keeler ambled back toward the park's large pavilion, he listed dozens more ideas he's hoping to pursue as the transformation work takes place.

He noted how the sports field could be moved up a large hill if part of the parking lot was removed; how a smaller pavilion in a floodplain area could be repurposed; how trails could be rerouted and a state park connection could be considered — ultimately leading EVM to ask what he was most

excited about in all of the plans and possibilities ahead.

It was the only time Keeler stood still on that afternoon walk. Following a short pause, the decades-long College Cultural neighborhood resident replied.

“When we moved in, this was a golf course,” he said, gesturing to the wide expanse behind him, absent any greens, tees, flags, or sand traps that would lead a modern day visitor to that understanding. “The golf course had a lot of value to the neighborhood... It seemed like it was always here, but when it went out, it didn't take long for us to realize, ‘wow, there's a real void

there in the neighborhood.”

Keeler looked around, taking in the park's scenery, its large pavilion, native pollinator garden, and the adjacent kiosk where volunteers will be teaching the public about urban wetlands and habitat restoration in warmer months.

“It's going to be something great for the people in the neighborhood — great for anybody else who wants to walk and doesn't want to leave Flint,” he said. “It's going to draw wildlife, it is going to add beauty to the neighborhood. We think that value is going to be restored. Yeah, I think that's what I get excited about.” ●

## candidates ...

(Continued from Page 7)

acquire vacant land next to their property.

**IRWIN:** The city has increased the size of its blight department and is working on grants for clean up that can be our springboard to find more funds.

**JARRETT:** I intend to work identifying resources and partnerships that promote homeownership. I believe transitioning renters to homeowners (holding a property deed) causes them to plant roots in a way that renters (who hold only receipts) don't. Those roots make families less likely to relocate which provides stabilization of neighborhoods, wards, and the city.

*Why should 9th Ward voters elect you to Flint City Council this May?*

**BROUSSEAU:** In my time in the United States Marine Corps and as an infantry officer in the United States Army, I have worked with people from various backgrounds toward a common goal.

There will not be a better advocate for the people of Flint than me.

My wife and I choose to make Flint our home, and this is where my daughter is growing up. I want Flint to be the best it can be and maintain a high quality of life for residents and businesses.

**IRWIN:** I bring a fresh perspective to council. A clean slate will work [and is] what is best for my ward and citizens of Flint.

**JARRETT:** I believe voters should elect Jonathan Jarrett to the Flint City Council because I am already working to earn their vote. I spent time at primary polls, and I make myself available to take calls and/or emails (810-230-4426 or jonathan.jarrett1122@gmail.com) from constituents.

Ultimately, I want every voter who cast their ballot for Jonathan Jarrett to feel good about that vote for months and years after the election. As the term expires in 2026, I want the quality of my work and my efforts to cause constituents to hope to see Jonathan Jarrett on a ballot again. ●

*Please note candidates' responses have been lightly edited for formatting and clarity purposes.*

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# Village Life

## The magic of attics

By Jan Worth-Nelson

*This Village Life column originally appeared in the April 2007 issue of East Village Magazine. It is reprinted and updated from Jan Worth-Nelson's newest book, "That's My Moon Over Court Street: Dispatches from a Life in Flint," which is available at Totem Books, Sloan Museum, Amazon.com, Flint Institute of Arts or by donating \$50 or more to EVM for a signed copy.*

Gaston Bachelard, that old French hippie who wrote *The Poetics of Space* in 1958 when we Baby Boomers were growing up, thought everybody should live in a house with an attic, especially in childhood.

He said the stairs to the attic "bear the mark of ascension to a more tranquil solitude." He said (speaking with pre-Sixties gender exclusion for which I forgive him) "we can no longer remain... men with only one story."

I like to think he suggested both meanings – not just another floor, but, in fact, another tale to tell. Bachelard thought we all need niches, corners – nests for daydreaming the stories of our lives.

So I'm writing this in my attic, sitting cross-legged on the dusty plank floor. To my left is a pile of rolled up pink insulation, to my right is the opening for the ladder and the scary ladder itself, at the moment anchored on the landing below.

The only light is a single bulb attached to the peaked beam. It doesn't throw enough illumination into the corners, so I'm a bit uneasy. I can only stand up in the middle.

But the attic smells great – woody and not at all mildewed, as if the beams up here, protected from all the foofaroo

of human life below since the house was built in 1935, have aged more slowly.

Anyway, despite a bit of healthy caution, I'm up here because I like attics. I love this specific attic. I love that there's a trap door with a blue strap hanging down, and I like that to get up there I have to scare myself silly pulling down the trap door and the ladder that screeches every time on its old metal rollers.

I like that the old houses in the Midwest almost all have attics. It gives

antique bed with a horsehair mattress. But I relished the privacy.

Among other luxuries, I discovered my first erotic literature up there, burrowed under a quilt, startled to discover in *The Song of Solomon* lines like "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," and "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night."

This was great! I've liked attics ever since.

My attic is already about a quarter full of stuff. I survey my ironwood kava bowl from Tonga, three feet across, cracked and unusable from the dry furnace air of my first winter in Flint; my high school yearbooks; a letter to myself bitterly explaining why an old boyfriend dumped me. Someday I'll throw it all away.

And then, a surprise bonanza – a single box of books left by somebody else – somebody in the early years of this house. How could I have missed this? Brushing off dust, I lift out a treasure trove.

First, *Dick Kent, Fur Trader*, copyright 1937, by Milton Richards. On its frontispiece, a dashing fellow with a belted plaid coat, knee-high boots and a fedora. He's holding back another guy who looks like a Mountie at the window of a log cabin. Inside, three bad-looking dudes hunch over a secret. The caption: "Dick, happening to

glance through the window, drew back suddenly with a cry of surprise."

And here's *Six Years in the Malay Jungle* by Carveth Wells, copyright 1923, beginning with this fabulous first sentence, "One morning in May, after getting out of bed on the wrong side

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Jan Worth Nelson's ironwood kava bowl from Tonga and high school yearbooks, circa 2024.

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

us something extra, another dimension to explore.

I spent several years of my childhood sleeping in the attic of a big brick parsonage in Ohio. My parents thought it was a bit odd that I liked it up there, with its plastered slope ceiling, tiny half-moon window, and my grandma's