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**A fire to remember**  
**The State Office Building blaze**  
See page 13

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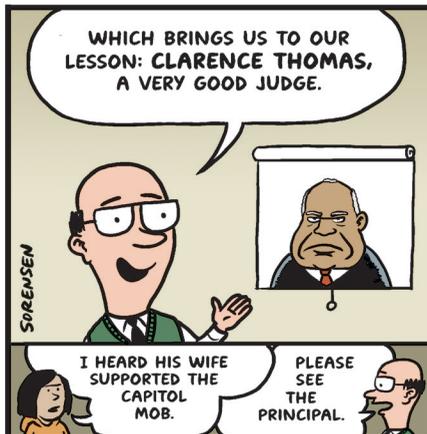
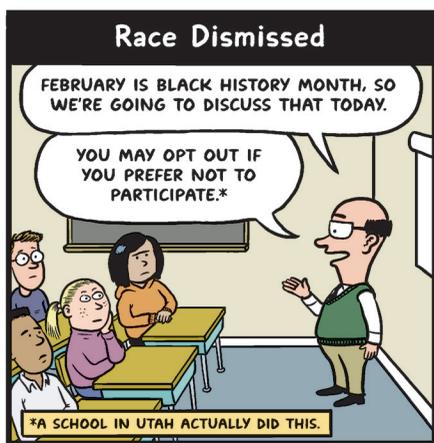
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Lansing native talks about his intern experience

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Local florists gear up for a pandemic Valentine's Day

**PAGE 18**



Chocolate muffins just in time for Valentine's Day

**PAGE 25**



Archive of Michigan

**Cover Art**

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## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

WELCOME BACK TO THE SUNDAY TALKING ABOUT STUFF SHOW! OUR TOPIC TODAY--ARE CONSERVATIVES BEING **SILENCED** BY BIG TECH AND THE MEDIA?

FIRST UP, SPECIAL GUEST **JOSH HAWLEY!** SENATOR, TELL US YOUR STORY!

**SUNDAY TALKING ABOUT STUFF SHOW**

MY BOOK WAS **SCRAPPED** JUST BECAUSE I HELPED INCITE A VIOLENT INSURRECTION! AND THEN I FOUND ANOTHER PUBLISHER.

SO APART FROM BEING A U.S. SENATOR, SECURING A NEW BOOK DEAL, AND APPEARING ON PROGRAMS LIKE OURS--YOU'RE A VICTIM OF **CANCEL CULTURE!**

AND I WRITE OP-EDS! OTHERWISE, YES.

NEXT UP, IT'S THE MYPILLOW GUY, WHO WAS KICKED OFF TWITTER FOR SPREADING ELECTION FRAUD CONSPIRACIES! NOW, WE **ONLY** WANT TO DISCUSS YOUR **TWITTER BAN--**

DOMINION VOTING MACHINES WERE RIGGED BY **COMMUNISTS!** THEY SWITCHED VOTES FROM TRUMP TO **BIDEN!** YARGLE BARGLE **BLARGH!**

HOLD ON, MY PRODUCER IS SAYING SOMETHING.

AH, SINCE DOMINION IS FILING A LOT OF LAWSUITS LATELY, I'VE BEEN ASKED TO CLARIFY THAT EVERY WORD YOU ARE SAYING IS NONSENSE, INCLUDING YARGLE, BARGLE, AND BLARGH.

LET'S MOVE QUICKLY ALONG TO MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, WHO WAS STRIPPED OF COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS DUE TO ALLEGED **EXTREMISM!** CONGRESSWOMAN, YOUR THOUGHTS?

**SUNDAY TALKING ABOUT STUFF SHOW**

Q IS **REAL!** SCHOOL SHOOTINGS ARE **STAGED!** FOREST FIRES ARE CAUSED BY **ROTHSCHILD SPACE LASERS!**

THESE ARE THINGS I **USED** TO BELIEVE, LAST WEEK! I'M A **DIFFERENT PERSON** NOW!

WELL, REPUBLICANS HAVE **YOU--**AND DEMOCRATS HAVE **A.O.C.** AND THE GREEN NEW DEAL! TWO SIDES OF THE SAME **COIN**, IF YOU ASK **ME!**

NEXT: AS REPUBLICANS FIGHT TO DEFEAT BIDEN'S ENTIRE AGENDA, WILL DEMOCRATS MEET THEM IN THE **MIDDLE--**OR RESORT TO UNSEEMLY **PARTISANSHIP?**

ALSO, DO I REMEMBER ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS? LET ALONE LAST **MONTH?** DO I EVEN KNOW WHERE I AM OR WHY I'M SAYING THESE **WORDS?**

WE'LL ASK OUR EXPERTS AFTER THESE MESSAGES.

**SUNDAY TALKING ABOUT STUFF SHOW**

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# PULSE

# NEWS & OPINION

## Betz barbs backfire

Just when we thought Brandon Betz was hitting his stride as the newest member of Lansing City Council, the first-term, First Ward Councilman finds himself in hot water after sending a series of hostile text messages to Lansing firefighter and Black Lives Matter activist Michael Lynn Jr. Capping off a particularly bad week, Betz “parted ways” with his employer due to the incident. On Monday night, his Council colleagues voted unanimously to censure Betz, asked President Peter Spadafore to remove him from his committee assignments and strongly recommended that he consider resigning.



Betz



Lynn

We supported Betz in his successful election challenge against former Councilwoman Jody Washington in 2019. We don’t regret our decision because we think Betz’ democratic socialist views bring a healthy perspective to the Council dais. Sadly, between cutting the line for his COVID-19 vaccine and now electronically assaulting one of his constituents, we wouldn’t be surprised to see a recall effort against him. Nor would we be shocked if he decided to resign. Betz has already publicly suggested that he may not run again in two years when his term expires, and he told City Pulse yesterday that he will resign “if his constituents want him to.” We’re deeply disappointed by his conduct, which was both abusive and inappropriate by any definition. Yet, because we believe in second chances, the possibility of redemption, and the power of established procedures for handling such matters, we leave it to his Council colleagues and the people of the First Ward to decide if he should continue as their elected representative.

## Underwhelmed

We were generally underwhelmed by Mayor Andy Schor’s ultra-short State of the City address last Wednesday evening. Clearly an effort to counter the narrative that he doesn’t work well with African Americans, Schor invited Police Chief Daryl Green, diversity consultant Teresa Bingman and Human Relations and Community Services Director Kim Coleman — all Black people who work for the mayor — to deliver prepared remarks as part of his address. He also somehow persuaded Ingham County Health

## The CP Edit

### Opinion

Officer Linda Vail to say nice things about him, despite her calling his cutting the line for the COVID-19 vaccine a “mistake.” For Schor, it was a smart move to align himself with the region’s most respected voice on all things related to the pandemic.



Schor

Despite our concerns over the narrow scope of his remarks, we were pleased to see the mayor continue to press forward on developing a racial equity plan for the city. Through the process he’s bound to absorb at least some measure of sensitivity and understanding for the plight of people less privileged — and with different color skin — than himself. We were also happy to see another grant program to provide pandemic relief to small businesses in Lansing, funded through the federal CARES program. Overall, given that this could be his last State of the City speech, we would have liked to hear more about his plans for Lansing in the post-pandemic era.

## Biased ordinances

On the heels of yet another City Council-related controversy, Fourth Ward Councilman Brian Jackson, who recently caught flak from this newspaper for missing numerous Council and committee meetings, has rolled out a plan to repeal a series of 15 city ordinances that he believes contribute to biased policing against people of color in Lansing. Setting aside the appearance that Jackson is trying to show he’s actually been earning his city paycheck, we think the ordinances he would like to repeal are a mixed bag. Some are truly relics of the past that have little relevance today and may well contribute to discriminatory enforcement of the law. Others are a bit vague and could stand to be clarified. At least one ordinance, the prohibition against loitering where illegal drugs are being sold, mirrors an existing state law. Repealing Lansing’s ordinance would have little practical effect.



Jackson

Among the ordinances under review, we do not support repealing the prohibition against carrying various weapons in public. Jackson argues the ordinance violates the Second Amendment, but we aren’t persuaded. The ordinance includes an escape clause that defers to state law on firearms regulation, which means open and concealed carry are permitted in Lansing to the extent allowed by state law. That covers the Second Amendment concerns. But the city’s ordinance applies to a much wider array of weapons, including crossbows, slingshots and more. We’re OK with a city ordinance that says you can’t brandish or discharge these weapons in public. Council should also be careful of the law of unintended consequences: When you repeal an ordinance against behavior like public begging, for example, it sends a message to those who engage in this behavior that it is now OK. While we prefer not to criminalize conduct that is merely annoying, we think the City Council should evaluate each ordinance on its merits and investigate the extent to which each is actually used as a tool of oppression against people of color before deciding its fate.

## Cannabis cares

The booming cannabis economy in Michigan is paying dividends beyond creating jobs and putting vacant properties back into productive use here in Lansing. Local cannabis companies are also stepping up to give back to the community. We’re especially impressed with Homegrown Cannabis Co. and its owner, Tom James, who recently awarded a full-ride college scholarship to Ridwan Sheikh-Omar, a promising young woman of color who attends Lansing Everett High School and plans to attend MSU this fall. All licensed cannabis companies are required to have a plan to promote and encourage participation in the industry by people from communities that have been disproportionately impacted by marijuana prohibition and enforcement to positively impact those communities. So far only 37 of the nearly 300 state licensed cannabis concerns have disclosed their social equity plans. None of them are from Lansing. We encourage Lansing-based cannabis enterprises to reveal their social equity plans and to follow the example of Homegrown Cannabis Co. by reinvesting some of their profits in creating a brighter future for Lansing youth.



Sheikh-Omar

Send letters to the editor to [letters@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:letters@lansingcitypulse.com).  
Please limit them to 250 words

# Embracing Black history every single day

By **TERESA BINGMAN**  
Opinion



*(Teresa A. Bingman is an attorney, hired in 2020 to lead Mayor Andy Schor's Racial Justice and Equity Alliance.)*

On Jan. 25, 1972, Shirley Chisholm, the first

Black woman elected to the United States Congress, announced her decision to run for president of the United States. Confronting the racial history of our country, she boldly proclaimed that leadership is having “the vision of what is necessary and the courage to make it possible.”

I read about Chisholm's bid for the presidency as an elementary student in the Weekly Reader and became curious about her story and the stories of other Black leaders. While reading the article, I smiled, beaming with pride and joy while imagining the possibilities for my life. I was inspired by Chisholm's announcement, which validated my parents' dream for their children — that Black people, many of whom were invisible to the leaders of our country, would have opportunities to earn a seat at tables of power in America.

Almost 50 years after Chisholm's announcement, U.S. Sen. Kamala Devi Harris ran for president under the banner of a “For the People” campaign logo, paying tribute to Chisholm. In December 2019, Harris suspended her campaign and was later named President Joe Biden's running mate. On Jan. 20, after a hard-fought campaign, Biden was sworn in as president and Harris became our nation's first woman and first woman of color to become the vice president.

On the campaign trail, Harris, who is Black and South Asian, talked about being part of the legacy of powerful Black women who came before her such as Chisholm, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Fannie Lou Hamer. I'm confident that their stories propelled Harris to remain steadfast.

Bethune, the daughter of slaves, was an accomplished educator, a champion for racial and gender equality, and founder of Bethune-Cookman University. In 1936, Bethune was named by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to serve as director of

Negro affairs of the National Youth Administration. She was the first Black woman to lead a federal agency.

Hamer, a voting and civil rights activist, was co-founder of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Having been brutally beaten and incarcerated while advocating for voting rights and racial justice, in August 1964, Hamer appeared, uninvited, at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. As she stood before the credentials committee to disclose injustices suffered by Black people who wanted to vote, she valiantly demanded that the committee seat the Freedom Party instead of Mississippi's all-white delegation, which mostly consisted of uncompromising segregationists. Many remember Hamer's quote: “We are sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

Black history stories of yesterday and today inspire people to become catalysts for change. We learn from the stories and become empowered. Some of us choose to dedicate our careers to help liberate marginalized communities, by fighting to address inequities, racism and sexism.

Indeed, hearing the riveting stories and witnessing the audacious actions of many Black leaders have motivated people from all cultures to work to advance to leadership roles in state Capitols, city and county halls, education systems, nonprofit organizations, corporations and beyond.

I embrace Black history this month and every single day, paying tribute to my ancestors and role models — Black pioneers who stand for positive change, racial justice and equity: historical figures, family members, ministers, educators, friends, and colleagues.

Racial justice and equity warriors continue to operate under the scourge of the stubborn history of racial inequities in America. Yet, I'm grateful for the people who support our efforts, wielding the power of their positions and their voices to make positive changes — people who unabashedly find ways to help blaze trails, break barriers, and create opportunities.

We must continue to fight for what's right and remain on the battlefield, while heeding Chisholm's words: “You don't make progress by whimpering and standing on the sidelines, you make progress by implementing ideas.”

# Stand with racial equity — or be part of the problem

By **DANA WATSON**  
Opinion



*(Dana Watson was appointed last year to the East Lansing City Council, becoming the city's first Black member. Watson, a Michigan State*

*University graduate, is an Ingham County Health Department educator.)*

Do you ever look around rooms and become acutely aware of what the makeup says about our systems? When there is a lack of representation, does systemic racism make it OK to maintain business as usual? If people that look like me are not at the table, who decides?

The city of East Lansing declared racism a public health crisis. The health and economic impacts of racism, not race, remain on repeat.

Systems have been deeply rooted in racism. Our resolutions speak to this. Therefore, doing different means creating systems that were not here before, asking questions that were barely being asked and demanding the end to practices and systems that left people of color behind.

We have an open canvas of parts to be interrupted. In thinking about East Lansing's progress, while I began protesting in the summer, our city had already secured our first diversity, equity and inclusion administrator, Elaine Hardy. She is leading us toward equitable, anti-racist practices and actions. After my appointment with fellow Council member Ron Bacon, he became the Council liaison for a study committee on an Independent Police Oversight Commission. They are in the middle of looking at parts of our systems and making space for a community to have an equitable voice about the practices that public tax dollars support.

Next, our Human Rights Commission works diligently to recognize groups and call out or alter parts of East Lansing that have systems that lack equity.

Finally, Hardy leads efforts to begin diversity, equity and inclusion training for the City of East Lansing.

I witnessed a summer of white allies genuinely standing up. More books

and articles on allyship are being read. Just as the military can't be the only people advocating for the military, people of color cannot be the only people advocating for people of color. Silence is acceptance.

Either you stand with racial equity, or you are part of the problem.

We can keep the ball rolling in big and small ways. We use our power for racial equity. Your power can lie in the story you tell, the people you support, where your money goes, the business doors that you choose to walk through, whom your money comes from, your voice and your time.

I like the checks and balances that our commissions, grassroots organizations, individuals and staff bring to the table. Active listening with an equity lens will lead to an attentiveness to racial justice. We will be moving from problematic practices to progressive change.

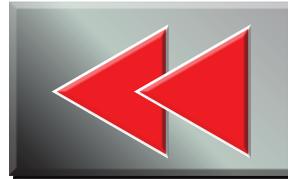
Acknowledging our racist system feels bad, but we must keep working to improve data on race in systems. How else do we recognize we are failing entire groups without looking at these numbers? We do understand now why this data might not have been collected or made available. Data can tell different stories when it is broken down by race.

We'll keep the ball rolling because decisionmakers, leaders and our community keep asking the harder questions and checking the work. Our grassroots groups have expert ideas on change and ways to keep this going. And let's support our youth voices and actions, like taking a knee or writing a profound essay, and provide them a seat at the table.

Making intentional space for wealth and opportunity is complicated, but I won't give up. I spend time looking toward groups that are making these achievements, and I also believe in my own community spearheading best practices. I look for more equity in our booming marijuana business. Also, implementing intentional access to wealth for Black and brown people in varying degrees with varying sectors is economic progress for Greater Lansing. In conclusion, we'll gain more momentum, as we change more angles and recreate policies that reduce or eliminate the racial disparities woven into our nation.

# REWIND

## NEWS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST 7 DAYS



By KYLE KAMINSKI

### Couch cleanup fines upheld

Lansing resident Kenneth Dagner is stuck with \$490 in fines after code enforcement hauled a couch off his front porch and the City Council denied a claim to have the fees waived. Councilwoman Kathie Dunbar said Dagner forgot to check the mail after his son was hospitalized in a hit-and-run accident on the River Trail. Had he checked it, he would've seen a notice that code enforcement picked up his couch and billed nearly \$500 for the cleanup. Still, city attorneys considered Dagner notified after the warning was put in the mail. Had Dagner carried it to the curb, city trash workers would've hauled it away for \$33. Still, only Councilman Brian Jackson voted this week to waive the fees.



Dunbar

### 'More conservative' police commissioner named

Samuel Brewster, a neighborhood watch coordinator described by Councilwoman Kathie Dunbar as "more conservative than what we would like" on police reform, was appointed to the Lansing Police Board of Commissioners on Monday night. Dunbar told the Council that Brewster wasn't interested in "less punitive models for social justice." Still, only she and Councilman Brian Jackson voted against his appointment, which expires in December 2024.

### Lansing explores boozy 'social districts'

The Lansing City Council revived plans this week to use alleys and other downtown spaces for to-go cocktails in Lansing after initial discussions were delayed over the summer. Plans to open at least three "social districts" that provide added space for outdoor drinking and dining between local bars is the subject of a public City Council hearing set for 7 p.m. Feb. 22.



### Emergency rental funds offered

More than \$27 million in federal funding earmarked for emergency rental assistance is expected to be administered through the city of Lansing this year, city officials announced this week. A resolution to accept the funding was waiting on legislative and gubernatorial approval on Tuesday. Those who need the city's help covering the rent can visit [lansingmi.gov/lansingcares](http://lansingmi.gov/lansingcares).

### Open calls for student artists

Student artists can apply for the 36th Annual Art Scholarship and the 11th Ingham Student Art Exhibit through the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center. Selected students will have their art displayed both in-person and at an online event. Scholarships are also available. The deadline for submissions is March 1. Visit [lansingartgallery.org/education](http://lansingartgallery.org/education) for more details.

### Cops report narcotics seizure

Kevin Christopher Coolman, 29, of Lansing, faces several felony charges after Lansing Police officers said he was caught

driving erratically with a handgun, an assault rifle and narcotics near St. Joseph Street and Everett Drive last week. Coolman faces multiple felony firearm charges as well as misdemeanor charges of resisting police and possession of a controlled substance. His bond was set at \$750 as the criminal case proceeds later this month in 54-A District Court.

### Olivia Letts dies at 93

Olivia Letts, the first Black teacher hired by the Lansing School District, died at age 93 in Chicago. Letts, who was hired in 1951, was widely remembered as a champion for desegregation and breaking barriers for teachers of color.



Letts

### Repeal of 15 ordinances sought

A committee of the Lansing City Council will consider a proposal this month from Councilman Brian Jackson that aims to repeal 15 ordinances, including laws that prohibit drug paraphernalia, loitering, begging and "annoying" behavior. Some laws carry a disparate impact on certain segments of the population or are simply unnecessary. Council President Peter Spadafore sent the proposal to the Committee on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion before it can head back to the full Council. Read more details at [lansingcitypulse.com](http://lansingcitypulse.com).

### State shares historic opioid settlement

Michigan joined 46 other states this week in sharing a \$573 million settlement to resolve an investigation into consulting firm McKinsey & Co. and its role in working for opioid companies, helping those companies promote their drugs and profiting from the ongoing opioid epidemic. Michigan's \$19.5 million payment will be used to help abate problems caused by opioids.

### Lansing's bond rating drops

Standard & Poors recently downgraded two of Lansing's bond ratings, citing concerns over dwindling reserve levels, as first reported by the Lansing State Journal. The change from AA- to A+ and from AA to AA- could make it more expensive for Lansing to borrow cash, which would in turn affect the city's ability to move forward with capital projects and road maintenance.



### Lansing Mall cinema shifts to drive-in

The vacant Lansing Mall movie theater is on its way to becoming Greenwood District Studios, according to reports from Fox47 News. Local comedian Amaru is reportedly leading the project and plans to replace the existing theater with a drive-in option. It's expected to open in May.

### Greater Lansing pot shops shield equity plans

The state Marijuana Regulatory Agency posted social equity plans of Michigan's recreational cannabis companies this month, revealing licensure application details that have until this week been kept hidden from public view and otherwise shielded from the Freedom of Information Act. But most license holders, including every pot shop in Greater Lansing, haven't granted permission to the state to release those plans. Read more details at [lansingcitypulse.com](http://lansingcitypulse.com).



### 1621 Stoney Point Drive, Delta Township

We paused this column because, candidly, we were starting to feel sort of guilty for dumping on local property owners during the pandemic. But this eyesore in Delta Township was worth a mention, if only because of the relative simplicity involved in solving the problem.

Neighbors say this home has been abandoned since late summer, and the former owner apparently decided his doorless two-car garage was the best place to stash a truckload of trash. Mattresses are piled inside on top of other furniture — all nicely protruding from the entryway.

Code enforcement officials said they've cited the owner — who is listed as William Richards in county property records — but haven't been able to go in and clear the trash without a court order. And local courtrooms aren't exactly prioritizing trash-filled garages for virtual hearings.

The place was vacant last week. We also didn't have any luck contacting Richards, but Delta Township officials assured us that the owner has promised to install a temporary garage door within the next 10 days — if only to appease the neighbors, who are sick and tired of seeing it.

"We have to go through due process. Neighbors don't seem to understand that we can't just take property out of there without a court order," a township spokeswoman said "We have assurance the door will be installed soon. Otherwise, our attorney will end up getting involved."

— KYLE KAMINSKI

"Eyesore of the Week" is our look at some of the seedier properties in Lansing. It rotates with Eye Candy of the Week and Eye for Design. Have a suggestion? Email [eye@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:eye@lansingcitypulse.com) or call it in at 517-999-6715.

# More contagious British COVID-19 variant arrives in Greater Lansing

The Barry-Eaton District Health Department announced this week that a confirmed case of the B117 coronavirus variant was detected in Eaton County. No further details about the infected individual or the possibility of wider community spread were released by Tuesday afternoon.

Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail also didn't have details at a briefing on Tuesday.

"Details about this individual are unknown and the investigation is ongoing," according to a release. "Barry-Eaton District Health Department is urging individuals to continue to take precautions against COVID-19, especially as new variants of the virus become more prevalent."

The case marked the first confirmed variant to be reported in Greater Lansing since the first Michigan case was reported in Washtenaw County in January. The B117 variant, which can spread more rapidly and could be more fatal, has since been reported in Calhoun, Kent and Oakland counties. Research suggests that vaccines are still just as effective against the variant.

## In related news...

State epidemic orders updated last week allowed for contact sports to resume in Michigan, provided masks are worn during practices and competition. If they cannot be worn, participants must be regularly tested for COVID-19. The new order remains in place through March 29.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer also created the Student Recovery Advisory Council last week, an appointed body designed to provide guidance geared toward supporting student learning and keeping schools "on track" while educators continue to be prioritized for vaccine distribution.

State officials also announced agreements with nearly all health insurers to extend their commitments to waive out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing, vaccination and treatment. The agreements reportedly cover 92% of the commercial health insurance market in Michigan.

Most staff at local hospitals and healthcare providers have received their first vaccine dose, the Lansing State Journal reports. About 70% of the staff at Eaton Rapids Medical Center have received at least one dose of the vaccine. At McLaren Greater Lansing, the rate is 58-60%. At Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, 64% of staff have received the vaccine.

The number of healthcare employees getting vaccines locally is also reportedly on the rise.

Ford Motor Co. recently designed and created clear N95 face masks so that hearing impaired people can read lips while protecting themselves from COVID-19, according to reports in the Detroit Free Press. The design is currently awaiting federal approval for N95 status.

During any other year, East Lansing



Courtesy State of Michigan

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (left) visited a vaccination clinic at the Michigan State University Pavilion on Monday, where she also met with Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail.

## CORONAVIRUS IN MICHIGAN BY THE NUMBERS...

**WEEK 48**

<u>Michigan</u>			<u>Eaton County</u>					
	CASES	DEATHS	VACC.		CASES	DEATHS	VACC.	
2/2/21	562,510	14,672	1,339,129	2/2/21	5,394	137	15,171	
2/9/21	569,980	14,965	N/A	2/9/21	5,471	142	N/A	
<b>Weekly Change</b>	<b>↑1.3%</b>	<b>↑2%</b>		<b>Weekly Change</b>	<b>↑1.4%</b>	<b>↑3.6%</b>		
<u>Greater Lansing</u>			<u>Clinton Co.</u>					
	CASES	DEATHS	VACC.		CASES	DEATHS	VACC.	
2/2/21	24,169	455	63,647	2/2/21	4,264	63	9,875	
2/9/21	24,668	460	N/A	2/9/21	4,322	64	N/A	
<b>Weekly Change</b>	<b>↑2.1%</b>	<b>↑1.1%</b>		<b>Weekly Change</b>	<b>↑1.4%</b>	<b>↑1.6%</b>		
<u>Ingham County</u>			The "Vaccines" category refers to the total number of doses administered to patients that reported living within each jurisdiction, according to state data. Patients require two doses.					
	CASES	DEATHS						VACC.
2/2/21	14,511	255						38,601
2/9/21	14,879	260						N/A
<b>Weekly Change</b>	<b>↑2.5%</b>	<b>↑2%</b>						

would have been alive last weekend with parties and drunk sports fans wandering the streets. But not during a special pandemic version of Super Bowl Sunday, where most students at

Michigan State University seemed to keep to themselves. Read more about student perspectives in a recent analysis published at lansingcitypulse.com.  
— KYLE KAMINSKI

### INGHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

#### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR MICHIGAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDING FOR INGHAM COUNTY SITE READINESS PROJECT

Ingham County will conduct a public hearing on February 23, 2021 at 6:30pm to be held virtually at <http://ingham.org/NewsEvents/Events.aspx> for the purpose of affording citizens an opportunity to examine and submit comments on the proposed application for a CDBG grant.

Ingham County proposes to use \$120,500 CDBG funds and approximately \$40,000 local and private partner matching funds to further prepare underutilized sites in the cities of Mason and Williamston and the townships of Vevay and Delhi for future industrial development through site readiness activities. These activities will benefit at least 51% low to moderate income persons and no persons will be displaced as a result of the proposed activities.

Further information, including a copy of each municipality's community development plan and Ingham County's CDBG application, is available for review. Please contact Dillon Rush at [dillon@purelansing.com](mailto:dillon@purelansing.com) or 517.331.0069 to review the documents. Comments to the Board of Commissioners may be submitted in writing or made virtually at the public hearing.

Citizen views and comments on the proposed application are welcome.

Ingham County  
Dillon Rush, Business Attraction, Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) | 517.331.0069

CP#21-025

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# Autistic LCC student handled mail for President Donald Trump

## Xavier DeGroat looks back on 'intense' internship at White House

President Donald Trump often referred to Xavier DeGroat as “X-Man” during his three-month internship at the White House last year. And DeGroat, a 30-year-old Lansing Community College student, said he will remember Trump for his fierce “tenacity.”

“The president liked what I was doing. President Trump asked me questions about how I made it this far. He was also impressed with all of the people that I’ve met,” DeGroat said.

DeGroat, of Lansing, is in his third year studying for a communications degree at LCC. He said he met former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani at a golf outing in 2016 and ever since has levied those political connections to advocate for people with autism and other disabilities.

In September, DeGroat said his friendship with the mayor (who later turned Trump attorney) landed him an unpaid internship at the White House — mostly sorting through the thousands of letters that Trump received, writing thank-you notes and sending out autographed portraits.

“It was presidential correspondence, and I handled the management side of it,” DeGroat said. “Every day I would read letters that were written to President Trump from constituents, asking for his help on stuff — whether that was following up on their stimulus checks or veterans benefits.”

This mailroom gig also carried a bit more prestige. DeGroat is reported-



Courtesy White House

DeGroat and My Pillow founder Mike Lindall, a major Trump supporter.



Courtesy White House

Xavier DeGroat (left), an autistic Lansing Community College student who interned at the White House last semester, in the Oval Office with President Donald J. Trump and his personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, who helped him secure the three-month gig.

ly the first person with autism to land an internship at the White House — a badge that he wears with high honors.

“I’m breaking barriers. And I’m not just doing this for myself, but also to inspire others — like being a loud man and speaking from your own heart rather than to let your disability stop you from doing something,” DeGroat added. “It’s for awareness and I also plan to publish a book.”

DeGroat was reserved about his political leanings. He supported most of Trump’s economic agenda and “parts” of his COVID-19 response plan, though he admits there were mistakes. And it was difficult to ignore the deluge of hate mail that found its way to Pennsylvania Avenue.

“Basically, I’m the one that received all the public requests, and I would write back thanking them for what they’ve written,” DeGroat said. “If they were more threatening or serious, those would be put in a junk box or sent off to someone higher up to review. Bad ones went to the junk box.”

Friendly mail received DeGroat’s appreciation with Trump’s signature stamp. Some of the more meaningful responses included a signed photograph of Trump, but only for his most loyal fans.

“The ones that were like ‘Donald Trump, you fucked up our country’ or ‘You screwed this up,’ well, we just didn’t reply to those,” DeGroat said. “We were done with those. Some of

them said ‘Donald Trump is a dictator.’ I’ve seen a lot like that. Others were thankful for the president.”

And while DeGroat didn’t interact with the leader of the free world on a daily basis, he said he managed to score a 30-minute sitdown with Trump and rubbed shoulders with several notable names, including Ivanka Trump, Jared Kushner, Mike Pompeo and many other political elites.

One time, DeGroat sat at Vice President Mike Pence’s desk as part of a private tour of the West Wing.

The brief Oval Office meeting also included discussions about homeland security and ways to make friendlier policies with the Transportation Security Administration — like a special area for travelers with autism to avoid the rush, noise and “intensity” of the screening process, he said.

DeGroat said Trump also signed a proclamation for World Autism Awareness Day in April after he asked that Giuliani forward the suggestion from the Lansing-based nonprofit Xavier DeGroat Autism Foundation — formed to create and promote opportunities for people with autism through advocacy, education, economic opportunity and other humanitarian means.

After the results of the November election became clear, DeGroat said the White House went from “intense” to “very, very quiet.” Staffers were packing things away and searching for jobs. Some were upset that Trump lost.

Others were just eager to find their next day job, he added.

“It was crazy. Most people didn’t know my personal relationship with Giuliani. I tried to keep that private for a lot of reasons — including my own safety. It got very crazy. Trump was intense. Rudy was intense. Everybody there was intense, but by December things got very, very quiet.”

DeGroat remembered near constant “chaos and craziness” throughout his internship, including being followed home after work one day. Secret Service agents later told him to stop wearing suit coats with the White House insignia; DeGroat stopped riding public transportation altogether.

“We were afraid there would be protests against Trump, but also protests for Trump,” he said.

All told DeGroat estimates that he spent \$25,000 during his three-month unpaid internship, but it’s a price he’d repay to rise “as high as you can go in the political leadership world,” he said. He said he hopes President Joe Biden’s administration will be just as inclusive and welcoming.

“Joe will meet with me somehow and Kamala Harris will too,” DeGroat added, noting he also plans to travel to Italy to meet with Pope Francis for another meeting on autism awareness.

“Right now, I’m also looking for a full-time job to get started in the public service world.”

— KYLE KAMINSKI

# Betz will resign 'if my constituents want me to'

1st Ward Lansing Councilman ponders resignation in Alaska

Lansing City Councilman Brandon Betz said Tuesday he will resign "if that's what my constituents want" after the Council voted unanimously Monday to censure him, strip him of his two committee assignments and urge his resignation.

Betz said Tuesday he will "continue to assess" whether he'll resign early from his first term in response to the backlash stemming from a heated text message exchange he had with a local Black Lives Matter leader.

"If my constituents want me to resign, I will," Betz said. "I will take the information under assessment and will continue to assess what it is my constituents want."

According to the Council resolution, Betz made "inflammatory and unbecoming statements" that "do not reflect the professionalism expected of City Council members." It also called for his removal from two Council committees, which Council President Peter Spadafore implemented immediately.

Another line "strongly suggests" to Betz that "he consider resigning" from the Council altogether.

Betz, who was absent from this week's Council meeting, checked in on Instagram from Anchorage, Alaska, his native state, on Monday evening. Spadafore said he requested to be excused from every meeting this month — a request that his colleagues also voted to deny at this week's meeting, which triggers a 60-day window after which the Council could force Betz to forfeit his office.

"This is almost the most egregious situation that I've faced. When I received notice about the comments and things that were said and I read



Lansing City Councilman Brandon Betz (at the lectern) shared the platform at City Hall last summer with Black activist Michael Lynn Jr., who is behind him.

through them, I was sickened by what I read," Councilman Carol Wood said in explaining her vote. "To lash out in that manner is just not acceptable."

After Mayor Andy Schor's annual State of the City address, Betz sent a string of text messages to firefighter and local Black activist Michael Lynn Jr. In them, Betz taunted Lynn — calling him a "dickbag troll who no one listens to" and a "weak ass bitch" who only wants more political clout.

Lynn repeatedly asked Betz to stop sending him messages. Betz kept them coming, later ending the chat with a one-liner that echoed across the First Ward: "I don't represent assholes."

Lynn sent screenshots of the conversation to City Pulse and later posted them on Facebook. Dozens of residents criticizing Betz at public comment pushed Monday's meeting past 11 p.m.

Betz also departed his job as a policy analyst with the Michigan League for Public Policy last week following the angry text-message exchange. His employer said they "agreed to part ways."

Former allies of Betz have also called for him to resign from the City Council, including the local chapter of the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Lansing Democratic Socialists of America.

Still, Betz suggested that he needed broader public input before making a decision to quit.

"I'm assessing whether or not to resign, and those assessments take time," he repeated.

Lynn said he also filed an ethics complaint against Betz. If he is found to have intimidated or threatened a member of the public, he could be slapped with a misdemeanor — additional grounds

for office forfeiture. The Ethics Board met Tuesday, but Lynn's complaint was not on the agenda. It's next meeting is March 9.

The remaining seven members of the City Council would be tasked to appoint a replacement through the end of the year should Betz resign from office or eventually be forced to leave. A replacement would be elected to finish out Betz' term, which runs through 2023.

Betz said he "will continue to represent the First Ward" while he ponders resignation this week.

He told City Pulse last week that his language was "unprofessional" and claimed that he only wrote the messages in response to Lynn's "threatening physical harm against me and my family multiple times." Lynn denied making or intending threats. Betz hasn't provided any evidence.

In a letter to the City Council sent on Sunday afternoon, Betz repeated those unfounded claims.

"I'm embarrassed by my actions and lack of restraint," Betz wrote. "I'm not originally from this great city. I'm from Alaska and was raised in a conservative Mormon family. Life and people are very different there. We thrive off hard work, marry quickly and take threats rather seriously."

Betz said he plans to address the public and offer Lynn and his family an apology "soon." Lynn said that apology hadn't arrived by Tuesday afternoon. Betz hasn't made any public statements.

"He keeps talking about these threats, and I just keep waiting to see any evidence," Lynn said.

City Attorney Jim Smiertka said aside from a censure, the City Council can also seek office forfeiture — but only if Betz is found unqualified to hold office, is convicted of a misdemeanor or felony or if he violates a section of the city charter that specifically calls for him to forfeit office.

See Council, Page 11

## East Lansing announces face mask photo contest winners

The East Lansing Downtown Development Authority selected three winners this week in last month's "Why I Wear a Mask" photo contest. Local residents were asked to submit photos of themselves along with a short narrative about why they wear face masks during the pandemic.

Winners received downtown East Lansing gift cards and vouchers to shop at the East Lansing Downtown Underground Market — an open-air market open on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., beginning Sunday (Feb. 14)



Arnold



Pedraza



Schupbach

and continuing through at least May 9 in the M.A.C. Avenue parking ramp.

### First Place — Alex Arnold

"I wear a mask to protect the small businesses that I love. When I walk the

alleys, I cherish the lights glowing above. I think of good times in East Lansing and know that, one day, I will get to relive the memories that seem so far away."

### Second Place — Miguel Pedraza

"I wear a mask to protect myself and those I love."

### Third Place — Lynn Schupbach

"We are wearing our masks so this

pandemic can end soon and then we can eat inside at our favorite restaurants with others and enjoy Spartan sports again, especially football tailgating and games!"

Honorable mentions included Aatiyana Davis, Brittany Biddle, Elise Schut, Guillermo Flores, Jacqui Carroll, Jill Berryman, Sarah Spohn, Tobias Vanderbush, William Rowan and Phillip Smith. Their photos and narratives can be viewed on the city of East Lansing's Facebook page.

— KYLE KAMINSKI

# Michigan's Senate majority leader calls Capitol insurrection a 'hoax'

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey's credibility long term was put into serious question Tuesday when a video surfaced calling the U.S. Capitol riots a "hoax" orchestrated



KYLE MELINN

POLITICS

## OPINION

ed by "puppeteers" who wanted to make former President Donald Trump and his supporters look bad.

"That wasn't the Trump people; that's been a hoax from day 1," Shirkey replied in the video, which was first reported by Detroit's Metro Times. "It was all prearranged ... It was all staged."

"Hell, Mitch McConnell was part of it," Shirkey added after questioning why there wasn't more security that day. "I think they wanted to have a mess."

The backstory is that Shirkey, R-Clarklake, was meeting with the executive board of the Hillsdale County Republican Party over dinner Feb. 3, the evening before the board voted to censure him for essentially not being conservative enough.

The official resolution ended up saying the Senate leader was supportive of banning open carry of firearms into the Capitol and eliminating the Electoral College. It also accused him of a "complete and utter surrender to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in regards to her unconscionable and unconstitutional shutdown of small businesses."

Apparently, Shirkey was aware the meeting was being recorded, which it was by someone believed to be Hillsdale Republican Party Secretary Jon Smith. The conversation was essentially Shirkey making his case as to why the censure vote shouldn't take place.

At a certain point in the more than one-hour long video, Shirkey was asked what he thought of the Jan. 6 riots.

At one point, Shirkey said, "I'm sure it was fantastic to watch," and he used his finger to illustrate tears falling as he explained that the incident made him nearly cry because he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Shirkey also questioned why a U.S. Capitol police officer "shot that woman" and how so many cameras could so perfectly record the events, including a gun coming around a corner.



Shirkey

The person recording asked Shirkey "how does this happen in government," and Shirkey replied that he believes "there are people above elected officials."

"There are puppeteers," he said.

More than 200 people have been charged with a range of crimes in connection with the insurrection, including at least two men from Michigan.

The long-term impact on Shirkey and the Senate Republican caucus could be severe. Democrats already are well into a campaign framing Shirkey as a Michigan Militia sympathizer who met with them to suggest they adopt Codes of Conduct.

He basically was trying to convince them to be more forthcoming if the firearms they were bring to Capitol demonstrations were not carrying live rounds of ammunition.

Nonetheless, the imagery of Shirkey's meeting with militiamen in the Senate gallery has remained in circulation as Democrats question his sincerity in pledging that he isn't running for governor in 2022.

Their skepticism is fueled by the fact Shirkey helped orchestrate \$500,000 in contributions for the Unlock Michigan campaign and appears to have remained politically active despite the fact he's term-limited from office after this year.

Hours before the "hoax" story came out, the Michigan Democratic Party already had called for Shirkey's resignation due to a New York Times story that plainly laid out the case of the Senate leader's connection to militias for a national audience to see.

"Mike Shirkey and the Republican Party had every chance to denounce hate and violence. Instead, they chose to bankroll it," said Michigan Democratic Party Chairwoman Lavora

Barnes.

But lending people — some of whom are his constituents — a sympathetic ear is one thing. Actually, verbalizing conspiracy theories is quite another (granted to an audience to whom he's clearly pandering) is quite another.

The comments put the Senate Republican caucus in a tough spot of

whether they want to continue with Shirkey as the face they want leading their caucus going into the 2022 elections.

It's clearly not a question they ever thought they'd need to face. Until now. *(Kyle Melinn of the Capitol news service MIRS is at melinnky@gmail.com.)*

## Council

from page 10

An Ethics Board finding or 60 days of unexcused absences could trigger forfeiture, he added.

Betz was a vocal critic of Schor but changed his tune this month, especially after joining him and Spadafore in cutting ahead of thousands of other eligible people for an early dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Betz also applauded the "tone and tenor" of Schor's latest State of the City remarks.

In response to those incidents, Lynn labeled Betz as "useless" and urged him to resign last week — triggering a public rift between two advocates with "major public platforms," Betz explained. Lynn and his wife also host the "Merica 20 to Life" live talk show on Facebook.

This month, Betz also backed away from pursuing a vote of no confidence against Schor, further eroding an "alliance" between Lynn and Betz in which they have both called for Schor to resign.

"I'm concerned for him. He needs help. I've seen this type of behavior before," Lynn told City Pulse "He's obviously having some type of crisis. But it's scary as a Black man. The way he was talking to me made me feel like he was trying to goad me into a fight. I've seen this before."

Betz also told City Pulse that Black Lives Matter activists have repeatedly pressured him to pursue a "no confidence" vote against Schor, but no other Council members would support it. Both Betz and Lynn acknowledged that the divide helped trigger a dispute between them.

"Although I had sacrificed my political career for this cause, they turned on me and began harassing me both privately and publicly," Betz told City Pulse in a brief statement last week.

Lynn said last week's text exchange was the first time the two have spoken since December.

Betz worked with activists and leaders of the Lansing chapter of Black Lives Matter last June to craft a resolution that would've defunded the Lansing Police Department. It never saw a vote.

Afterward, those ties devolved into a "one-directional relationship where I was told what to do by Black Lives Matter, and I did it without questioning," Betz told City Pulse. That included pushing a no-confidence vote against Schor last year that also never materialized, he said.

"I made calls to each Council person in turn to determine their support and I found that I would be the only yes vote on Council on that particular vote. As such, I made the decision to not move forward because I felt that bringing forward a vote of no confidence would not be effective at achieving the goals that Black Lives Matter were seeking," Betz said in a statement last week.

In a Facebook post, Black Lives Matter Lansing said Betz "agreed" to call for a vote of no confidence against Schor in November. His failure to do so "effectively ended the alliance."

"The community has moved on without you to continue our work to defund the police which began long before you ever thought about the Lansing City Council or building a political career on the Black struggle for liberation," according to a Facebook post shared by BLM last week.

Schor — who is facing racial discrimination lawsuits from Lynn and several other current and former employees — declined to comment on the situation last week, but on Monday also admonished Betz' conduct, labeling it "inappropriate and frankly appalling" in his remarks.

"As elected leaders, we should always rise above the name calling," Schor added.

— KYLE KAMINSKI



# CityPULSE LOCAL EXPERTS

## FINANCE

### Building a Healthy Financial Foundation

Financial planning and saving for the future is scary to many. How do I plan for something so far down the road? Do I have the money to even begin? Here are a few basics that will hopefully take the fear and uncertainty out of saving:

**#1 : An emergency fund.** This bank account helps you deal with the unexpected. You know that label you see on fire extinguisher boxes – “break glass in case of emergency?” Only in a financial emergency should you “break into” this account. Everyone’s definition varies, but examples include hospital bills, major car repairs, and unemployment.

**#2: A taxable investing account.** Also known as a brokerage account. The invested assets in these accounts are taxed each year. This account gives you access to a wide range of investment products, which can help complement the other accounts in your financial foundation.

**#3: An IRA.** This is a tax-advantaged retirement savings account that you own. There are traditional IRAs (up-front contributions are not taxed; retirement withdrawals are) and Roth IRAs (up-front contributions are taxed; retirement withdrawals are not, provided federal tax laws are followed).



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## GIFTS

### The importance of shopping with local merchants

Shopping small and supporting our locally owned small businesses has been especially important throughout the last few months. It will continue to be important as we embrace the unknown of the future. But there are ways that you can leverage these dollars spent. Look at what you are purchasing. Where is this item made?

By purchasing from small, locally owned businesses, choosing items made domestically, and even better, by local companies, you are triggering a domino effect for your dollars.

There is a movement in the United Kingdom that has extended around the world; “Just A Card.” Their efforts are to show how purchases even as small as buying a greeting card can have a dramatic increase on a small business’ or makers’ bottom line. Imagine if 500 people would commit to purchasing between \$3 and \$5 per month in a shop. That \$1,500-\$2,500 can mean the difference between paying bills and not. Think about it.



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## COUNTY OF INGHAM 2021 TENTATIVE RATIOS AND TENTATIVE FACTORS PREPARED BY DEPARTMENT OF EQUALIZATION

### Real Property

Unit	Agricultural		Commercial		Industrial		Residential		Timber-Cutover		Developmental		Personal Property	
	Ratio	Factor	Ratio	Factor	Ratio	Factor	Ratio	Factor	Ratio	Factor	Ratio	Factor	Ratio	Factor
01 - ALAIEDON TOWNSHIP	49.93	1.0000	50.60	0.9882	48.14	1.0386	49.76	1.0000	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
02 - AURELIUS TOWNSHIP	52.25	0.9569	48.47	1.0316	43.01	1.1625	47.20	1.0593	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
03 - BUNKER HILL TOWNSHIP	50.06	0.9988	45.45	1.1001	49.71	1.0000	46.77	1.0691	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
04 - DELHI CHARTER TOWNSHIP	50.14	0.9972	47.86	1.0447	49.52	1.0000	47.31	1.0569	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
05 - INGHAM TOWNSHIP	47.81	1.0458	52.37	0.9548	0.00	0.0000	44.68	1.1191	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
06 - LANSING CHARTER TOWNSHIP	NC	NC	49.76	1.0000	48.54	1.0301	46.88	1.0666	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
07 - LEROY TOWNSHIP	51.46	0.9716	50.67	0.9868	48.26	1.0361	47.71	1.0480	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
08 - LESLIE TOWNSHIP	48.35	1.0341	47.38	1.0553	50.42	0.9917	46.79	1.0686	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
09 - LOCKE TOWNSHIP	50.19	0.9962	58.07	0.8610	56.21	0.8895	44.63	1.1203	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
10 - MERIDIAN CHARTER TOWNSHIP	NC	NC	50.31	0.9938	47.23	1.0587	47.93	1.0432	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
11 - ONONDAGA TOWNSHIP	46.32	1.0795	47.26	1.0580	50.18	0.9964	46.20	1.0823	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
12 - STOCKBRIDGE TOWNSHIP	49.08	1.0000	45.69	1.0943	49.70	1.0000	48.84	1.0238	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
13 - VEVA TOWNSHIP	49.05	1.0000	49.63	1.0000	43.34	1.1537	44.38	1.1266	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
14 - WHEATFIELD TOWNSHIP	50.39	0.9923	45.91	1.0891	50.93	0.9817	47.34	1.0562	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
15 - WHITE OAK TOWNSHIP	45.56	1.0975	47.06	1.0625	48.23	1.0367	48.82	1.0242	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
16 - WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP	50.53	0.9895	46.59	1.0732	45.56	1.0975	48.36	1.0339	NC	NC	49.80	1.0000	50.00	1.0000
51 - CITY OF EAST LANSING	NC	NC	49.05	1.0000	46.32	1.0795	47.09	1.0618	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
52 - CITY OF LANSING	NC	NC	48.57	1.0295	47.01	1.0636	46.67	1.0714	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
55 - CITY OF LESLIE	NC	NC	48.31	1.0350	48.71	1.0265	45.40	1.1013	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
53 - CITY OF MASON	NC	NC	49.64	1.0000	49.72	1.0000	47.15	1.0605	NC	NC	NC	NC	50.00	1.0000
54 - CITY OF WILLIAMSTON	NC	NC	48.21	1.0371	52.77	0.9475	46.97	1.0645	NC	NC	49.31	1.0000	50.00	1.0000

These Tentative Ratios and Estimated Factors are published in compliance with PA 165 of 1971. These figures are temporary in character and are intended to be informative in nature as of the third Monday in February. Local assessing units and board of review activities may significantly change the tentative figures. Finalized Ratios and Factors will result from the activity of the local units and through Equalization procedures. The recommended Tentative Ratios and Estimated Factors shall not prejudice the Equalization procedures of Ingham County or the State of Michigan.

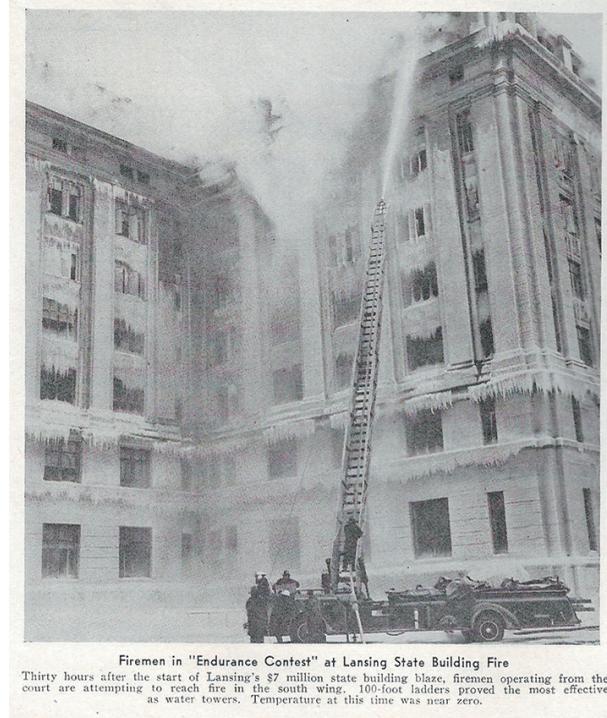
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Courtesy of Historical Society of Greater Lansing



Firemen in "Endurance Contest" at Lansing State Building Fire  
Thirty hours after the start of Lansing's \$7 million state building blaze, firemen operating from the court are attempting to reach fire in the south wing. 100-foot ladders proved the most effective as water towers. Temperature at this time was near zero.

Courtesy of Craig Whitford

A fire 70 years ago this week engulfing the Elliott-Larsen Building, taken known as the State Office Building and later as the Lewis Cass building.

# How a blazing fire and shards of ice nearly consumed a state office building

## Memories of Lansing's most devastating structural fire

By **BILL CASTANIER**

On a subzero night 70 years ago, tears were streaming down the face of Geneva Kebler Wiskemann. She can vividly recall the night of Feb. 8, 1951. She stood in front of the Estes Leadley Funeral Home and gazed across Walnut Street as smoke and flames engulfed the State Office Building, where she worked as a circulation specialist for the Library of Michigan.

Wiskemann, who will be 94 on Monday, said she first learned there was a fire while shelving books on the first-floor reading room, which has high ceilings and a glass over-floor on its west end.

"Smoke began coming out of the registers," she said.

Along with 1,300 other state employees, Wiskemann was evacuated but returned later in the evening with George Kebler, her future husband. She cried tears of despair for the more than 500,000 rare books and archival material, which were at risk from the slow-moving fire and subsequent water damage.

"It was so cold out that water froze like crystals when it was shot from the fire-hoses," she said.

The six-story office building, now known as the Elliott-Larsen Building, was considered state-of-the-art when it was completed in 1922 at a cost approaching \$3 million. An additional floor was added in 1923 — when the building was named after 19th century U.S. Sen. Lewis Cass — and an attic was



Courtesy photo

Geneva Kebler Wiskemann working at the Archives of Michigan circa 1959.

converted to a mezzanine. As the only state building other than the Capitol, numerous government departments occupied its halls including the Library of Michigan, the State Banking Commission and the Michigan Highway Department. The neo-classical U-shaped building was designed by local architect E.A. Bowd and constructed using reinforced concrete with marble staircases and concrete pillars supporting the floors. It had entrances on all four sides.

An alarm notifying the Fire Department

See Fire, Page 14

### Construction of the Elliot-Larsen Building



Courtesy of Craig Whitford

Workers unload stone used in the construction of the State Office Building, which began in 1920. The state renamed it the Elliott-Larsen Building last year.



Smoke billows, firemen battle flames in this aerial picture of building.

Courtesy of Craig Whitford

The caption on this photo says: "Smoke billows, firemen battle flames in this aerial picture."

# Fire

from page 13

was pulled at 12:40 p.m., while most workers were at lunch and cashing their paychecks. Firefighters arriving on the scene were confounded by heavy smoke and intense heat from the mezzanine level between the sixth and seventh floor, which held state records in locked wire cages and housed the Highway Department's microfilming unit.

Wiskemann said a variety of individuals who were still on their lunch break held keys for the different wire cages, thus making them inaccessible to firefighters.

The first firefighters on the scene soon asked for smoke masks and a three-alarm fire notice was sent out, calling more than 110 firefighters to the scene. Reports at the time said the Fire Command considered using a former burglar to dynamite a hole through the roof, so water hoses could be aimed directly at the fire.

By nightfall of Feb. 8, the fire was still raging and Battle Creek, Flint and Jackson sent their aerial trucks and a pumper to help out. Flames began erupting from the seventh floor at about 9:45 p.m. and hoses were stretched



Courtesy of Archives of Michigan

Aerial fire trucks from five Michigan cities were called in to fight the fire supplemented by construction booms used to hold hoses. An estimate 5 million gallons of water was poured on the fire.

out on three 100-foot booms provided by two local construction companies, the Christman Co. and Granger, in order to reach the top floors. By 2 a.m., equipment began arriving from Grand Rapids, allowing firefighters to pour 5,000 gallons per minute on the fire. Lansing's Fire Engine No. 1 was damaged by ice and removed from the scene.

During the first day of the fire, Gov. G. Mennen Williams inspected the building twice, once making it all the way to the seventh floor and walking directly into the smoke-filled hallways. He was asked to leave because of the obvious danger.

See Fire, Page 15



Courtesy of Archives of Michigan

The intense heat melted steel shelves holding tens of thousands of library books, which were either incinerated or waterlogged.



Courtesy of Archives of Michigan

The damage on the Mezzanine level was so horrific it was impossible to save historical records and the remains were rolled out in wheelbarrows.

# Fire

from page 14

A contemporaneous news report in the Lansing State Journal quoted a member of the entourage as saying, "It was like a Democrat walking into a convention of Republicans or Shadrach into the fiery furnace."

Courageous state employees and the state police scurried to cover furniture, equipment and records with tarpaulins on the first five floors, not knowing that the mezzanine floor was at risk of collapsing into the floor below. At 7:30 p.m., a portion of the seventh floor in the north wing collapsed onto the M-6 level, providing an opening for the fire to spread.

The next morning, Friday, Feb. 9, a vault on the seventh floor's south wing crashed through to the M-6 level, destroying huge amounts of historical records and books.

Fighting fatigue, bitter cold and smoke inhalation, numerous firefighters were hospitalized, including the fire chief. During the fire, the Red Cross, Salvation Army and Box 23 — a support group for the Lansing Fire Department that grew out of the spectacular Kerns Hotel fire in 1934 — provided warm socks, gloves, coffee and food to the exhausted and freezing firefighters.

By Saturday, the fire was mostly extinguished, and members of the fire marshal crew toured the building and assessed the damage. On Saturday, some astounding news was revealed when Richard Shay, a 19-year-old Highway Department employee, admitted to intentionally tossing a match into a wastebasket, thus igniting the disastrous fire. Shay had hoped that by starting a small fire, extinguishing it and admitting fault, he would be excluded from the draft for the Korean War. Later, Shay's alibi fell apart and he plead guilty to arson. He served three years, a year less than his four-to-10-year sentence. He resided briefly in Lansing before moving out of state.

When the fire diminished, the Christman Co. and Granger began securing the building. On the sixth day, while the fire was still smoldering, moving companies began relocating furniture and vital records to other sites across the city.

As the fire progressed on Thursday, temperatures plummeted to 10 degrees below zero, giving the building's appearance the look of a giant ice sculpture spewing frozen crystals from all of its windows and doors. The fire made national news and two radio stations broadcasted remotely from the location. Gawkers became such a problem that local police and the state police were stationed at the site.

It was determined the mezzanine and the seventh floor were damaged beyond repair. Today, the original building has only six floors.

Finger-pointing began while the fire was still raging, and a several-year-old report by the state Fire Marshal was dragged out, which recommended numerous safety changes on the mezzanine including fire suppression equipment and enclosing stairwells. None were implemented due to cost concerns. Legislators began calling the State



Lansing Fire Chief Felled in State Building Fire

Fire Chief Hugo Fisher, who led the initial attack on the incendiary fire in the Lansing state office building, is carried out by police and firemen, mask equipped, after his collapse from smoke poisoning and exhaustion.

Capitol a firetrap.

By Saturday, state librarian Loleta D. Fyan began assessing the loss of rare historical records and books. One item presumed damaged was a rare edition of "Audubon's Birds of North America," along with a complete set of U.S. Supreme Court decisions and rare historical newspapers. It was estimated that 500,000 volumes had been damaged, some frozen in cakes of ice. The collection of art reproductions of masterpieces by Michigan artists, which was loaned to schools, literary societies and associations, was also damaged.

Wiskemann said while touring the building after the fire was extinguished, she noticed the Audubon was untouched by fire but water was slowly dripping on it. She and another employee rescued it.

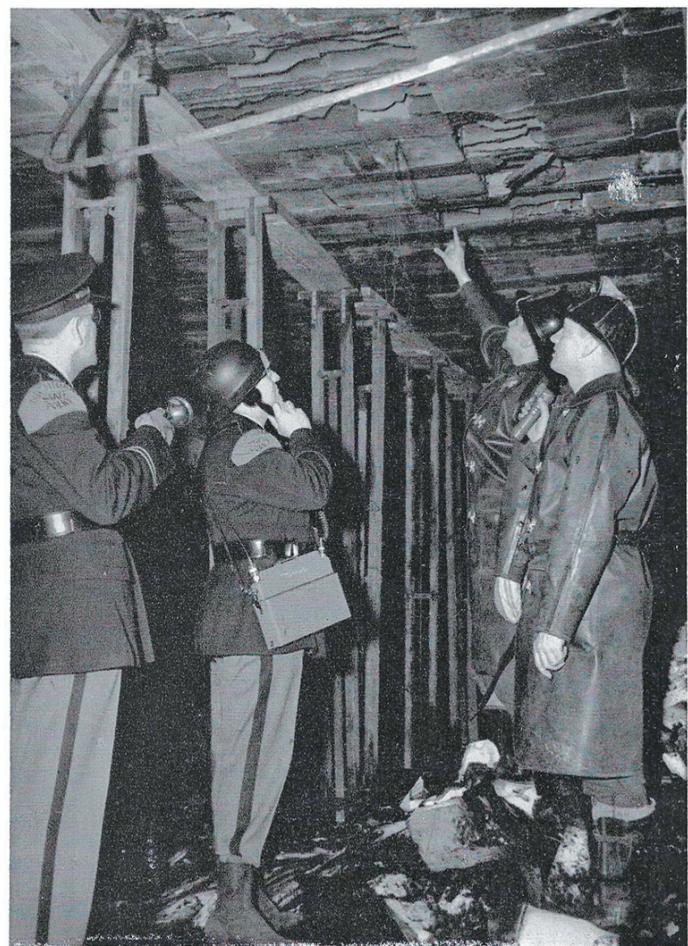
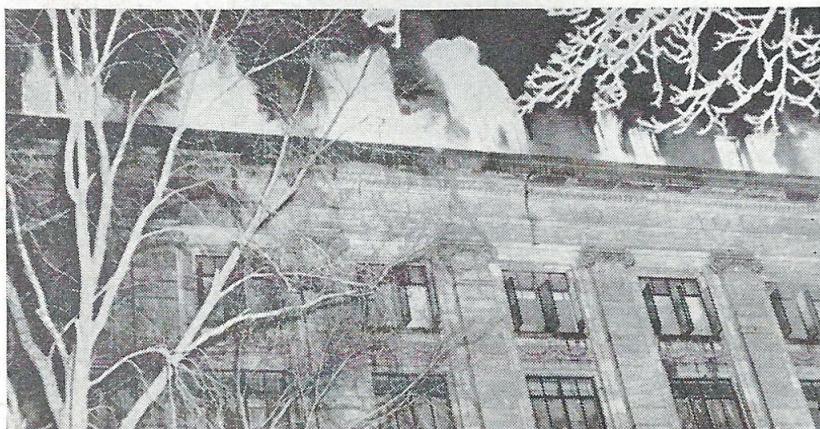
"Overall, the Archives and the State's Historical Commission lost the most. Unique, one-of-a-kind materials, even the catalog perished," she said. Wiskemann said everything from Civil War diaries to early 20th century records of administrations were lost.

The state librarian led a herculean effort to save the rare books and documents by transporting them to the fieldhouse at the Boys Vocational Center, where the books would be dried out. Librarians, according to Wiskemann, worked around the clock turning pages of waterlogged books, as giant fans blew air across them. Unfortunately, the state's traveling library, which was stored in the basement, was completely lost to water damage. Today, numerous books in the Library of Michigan collection have statements pasted onto them stating damage may be due to the fire.

An untold number of books and records were lost, and Wiskemann

Night view of flames issuing from the seventh floor on the street side of the Michigan State Office Building

Acme



State Police and firemen inspect charred area while one trooper talks to officers on "walkie talkie."

See Fire, Page 16

Photos courtesy of Craig Whitford

# Fire

from page 15

recalled walking through the fire-ravaged library and seeing what appeared to be ash-covered books. “As we walked by them, the currents from our movement caused them to totally disintegrate before our eyes. It was eerie,” she said.

Officials anxiously awaited the opening of a special steel vault, which held Michigan’s most important formative statehood documents. The documents were found relatively unscathed and the safe manufacturer, Mosler Safe Co., used the fire in an ad campaign to promote the durability of its safes.

Michigan began the rebuilding process immediately by lopping off the mezzanine and top floor and closing the north and south entrances. The building reopened two years later after receiving \$32 million in renovations, and it was renamed the Lewis Cass Building after Michigan’s first territorial governor. In 2020, it was renamed the Elliott-Larsen Building as part of a national movement to rename buildings and remove monuments that honor leaders who owned slaves, as Cass did. The building was added to the National Historical Register in 1984.

The fire still stands as Lansing’s most devastating in terms of structural



Courtesy of Archives of Michigan

State workers unload books salvaged from the fire at the fieldhouse of the Boys Vocational School on Pennsylvania. The books were dried out and then rebound for use.

loss, but fortunately no lives were lost — unlike Lansing’s other destructive fire at the Kerns Hotel in 1934, which

claimed 34 lives, including seven legislators.

Wiskemann went on to work for more than 30 years at the Archives of Michigan and became a force in preservation and local history and has donated her family collection to the

Archives.

After working in the building on cleanup duty following the fire, Wiskemann has not returned to the building.

“There are too many spirits in there for me,” she said.

**NOTICE**

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to provide essential protections to vulnerable Michiganders and this State’s health care system and other critical infrastructure, it is crucial that all Michiganders take steps to limit in-person contact, particularly in the context of large groups. Therefore, the Board of Review will be conducted via audio/video conference in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended, in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. The board will meet on March 08, 09, 10, 11, & 12 2021 at 9:00 AM to 12:00 NOON and 1:30PM to 4:00PM. **EXCEPT** for Wednesday, March 10 from 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM to review the assessment roll and hear appeals from taxpayers. **Taxpayers are permitted to file their protest by letter and a personal appearance is not required.** Protest at the Board of Review is necessary to protect your right to further appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal if your property is residential or agricultural. **Letter appeals are strongly encouraged and must be received in the Assessor’s Office by 4:30 PM, March 11, 2021.** City of Lansing will also hold its Organizational meeting on Tuesday March 2nd, 2021 at 2:00 PM; no appeals may be heard at this meeting. Please call the City of Lansing Assessor’s Office at (517) 483-7624 for information about access to the meeting per via audio/video conference.

**RATIO AND TENTATIVE EQUALIZATION FACTORS FOR 2021  
Ingham County**

Property Class	Tentative Ratio	Multiplier
Agricultural	N/C	
Commercial	48.57	1.02952
Industrial	47.01	1.0636
Residential	46.67	1.07136
Timber-Cutover	N/C	
Developmental	N/C	
Personal	50.00	1.0000

**Eaton County**

Property Class	Tentative Ratio	Multiplier
Agricultural	N/C	
Commercial	0.5126	.97542
Industrial	47.64	1.04954
Residential	45.91	1.08909
Timber-Cutover	N/C	
Developmental	N/C	
Personal	50.00	1.0000

**Clinton County**

Property Class	Tentative Ratio	Multiplier
Agricultural	54.91	0.9106
Commercial	45.8	1.0917
Industrial	51.2	0.98
Residential	N/C	
Timber-Cutover	N/C	
Developmental	N/C	
Personal	50.00	1.0000

CP#21-026

**2021 MARCH BOARD OF REVIEW  
MEETING SCHEDULE  
Charter Township of Lansing, Ingham County**

The Lansing Charter Township Board of Review for March 2021 will be held by electronic remote access, unless by the dates of the March Board of Review meetings it becomes lawful under state agency rules and statute for an in-person meeting to be held. Electronic remote access, in accordance with Michigan law, will be implemented in response to COVID-19 social distancing requirements and limitations on the number of individuals in a meeting hall.

If in-person meetings become a lawful option, then the meeting will be held both in person at the Lansing Charter Township Hall, 3209 W Michigan Avenue and via electronic remote access.

The public may participate in the meeting through electronic remote access via Zoom access by computer, smart phone/device using the following link:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2315421280>

Meeting ID: 231 542 1280  
Passcode: LansingTwp  
One tap mobile  
+16465588656, 2315421280# US (New York)  
+13017158592, 2315421280# US (Washington DC)  
Dial by your location  
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)  
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)  
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)  
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)  
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)  
Meeting ID: 231 542 1280

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcoDJDYU8>

Taxpayers are able to protest by letter or email, sent to: Board of Review, 3209 W Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48917.  
Or to [DeeAnnO@lansingtowship.org](mailto:DeeAnnO@lansingtowship.org), provided protest is received prior to March 12, 2021.

The township will post the information confirming whether the March BOR will meet in person on its notice (*board, sign, window*), and the township’s website.

**The Lansing Charter Township March Board of Review will meet on the following dates:**

- Tuesday, March 2, 2021, 11:00 a.m. - **Organizational Meeting**
- Monday, March 8, 2021, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**
- Monday, March 8, 2021, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**
- Wednesday, March 10, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**
- Friday, March 12, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - **Appeal Hearing**

The tentative ratios and the estimated multipliers for each class of real property and personal property for 2021 are as follows:

\*Commercial.....49.76%.....1.00000  
\*Residential.....46.88%.....1.06656  
\*Industrial.....48.54%.....1.03008  
\*Personal Property...50.00%.....1.00000

**Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Notice**

The Township will provide necessary reasonable services to individuals with disabilities at the Board of Review meetings upon 2 days notice.  
Contact: Margaret Sanders, Clerk, 3209 W Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48917 517-485-4063

DeeAnn Overton, Secretary of Board of Review

CP#21-023

# ARTS & CULTURE

## ART • BOOKS • FILM • MUSIC

### Where to get your paczki fix for Fat Tuesday

By SKYLER ASHLEY

Fat Tuesday is near — that means it's time to prepare for one of Lansing's favorite winter traditions: consuming boatloads of paczkis.

Paczkis, which have really caught on in the Midwest, hail from Poland and are instantly recognizable thanks to their powdered sugar coating and various flavors of crème or jelly filling. Think donut — but with a richer, sweeter, chewier yeast dough.

When City Pulse asked readers to share their favorite place to pick up a box of paczkis, many lamented the closing of Roma Bakery, a local favorite that shut its doors in 2019. Roma was especially famous across town during Fat Tuesday for its delicious ricotta-filled paczkis. “If it's not Roma, I don't want any,” Joey Waffles wrote in reply to our Facebook post. Annette Gonzales agreed: “Nowhere. Roma is gone.”

But not everybody who respond-

ed chose to mourn the loss of Roma Bakery. Jayne Van Kirk gave a shout-out to Groovy Donuts as her favorite supplier of paczkis. In fact, Groovy Donuts has been getting a lot of love on local social media as people discuss their favorite flavors of paczkis.

But Briannon Cierpilowski must have a secret recipe — she said her favorite place to get a paczki is her own kitchen.

If you have yet to try a paczki, a handful of local bakeries are currently offering the seasonal treat. Quality Dairy is one of the most popular places to get a box of paczkis. Just stop by any one of its locations and you should be able to find them.

Groovy Donuts will also be returning for the paczki action this year, and are even offering a vegan option on Fat Tuesday. And Bake N' Cakes just teased a picture of a mouthwatering batch of paczkis on Facebook. But you better act fast,

**Bake N' Cakes**  
**\$1.29/individual, \$15/dozen**  
 3003 E. Kalamazoo St.  
 Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
 Saturday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
 (517) 337-2253, Bakencakes.com

**Groovy Donuts**  
**\$2 per paczki**  
 313 W. Grand River Ave., Williamston  
 3054 E. Lake Lansing Road, East Lansing  
 Tuesday, Feb.16, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
 Thursday-Sunday, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
 (517) 580-7302, Groovydonuts.com

**Quality Dairy**  
**\$1.69/individual, \$7.99/half dozen, \$14.99 dozen**  
 Several locations across Greater Lansing  
 Qualitydairy.com

**Meijer**  
**\$2.99 for a box of four**  
 Several locations across Greater Lansing  
 Meijer.com

**Lil G's**  
**\$9.99 for a box of four**  
 Tuesday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
 Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
 Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
 2459 Ontario Dr., St. Johns  
 (989) 545-7090, Lilgsitalian.com

**Tom's Food Center**  
**\$5.49 for a box of six**  
 1619 W. Grand River Ave., Okemos  
 Daily, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.  
 (517) 488-0600, Tomsfoodcenter.com

because once Fat Tuesday comes and goes, bakeries typically cease production. Here's a helpful guide

of where to quickly get your hands on the coveted paczki before it's too late.

### Lansing shares favorite Valentine's Day memories

By SKYLER ASHLEY

Valentine's Day might be tricky to celebrate this year thanks to the coronavirus. It will be like we're all in long-distance relationships. But we can always revisit fond memories that make us either blush, laugh or — if they were awkward — cringe.

My own stories in recent years both involve poor planning on my part. During my sophomore year of college, a brilliant Valentine's Day date I had planned involved geocaching — an activity where you use geographic coordinates to find little buried treasures left behind by fellow participants. The only problem is we live in Michigan.

Frolicking around in the nearly zero-degree February weather was not fun or romantic. Thankfully, we were able to laugh at the lame activity over dinner.

I also recall a time where I wanted to surprise a date with a special heart-

shaped sushi package from a local grocer. Unfortunately, they were entirely sold out. Instead, I bought individual sushi packages and arranged them into a heart myself.

We asked you to share some of your Valentine's Day experiences. Some were a little sweeter than others. Here are the responses we received:



“The most romantic thing my boyfriend, Sean ever did was surprise me by taking me on the Jaws ride at Universal Studios. Since “Jaws” is my favorite movie, it was a huge deal. While in line for over an hour, Sean shared with other guests in line that it was my favorite movie and I had not been on the ride before. When Jaws attacked us it was right at my seat! Sean held me close and kept me safe from the fake shark.”

— Tiesha King



“On Valentine's Day last year, my fiancé Nathan & I went to Disney World together to celebrate our engagement.”

— Alexis Marie



“My first Valentine's Day with my girlfriend, Harmony, we went to Sea Life Aquarium in Auburn Hills. We saw hella jellyfish and they were super dope and then this giant crab thing kept trying to size me up. Then I took her to Fabulous Mac and Cheese, which is the coolest mac and cheese joint ever and a personal favorite of mine”

— Collin Spencer



“For loners, Valentine's Day has always had a special kind of sting to it. When I was 13, I was at my awkward zenith. My crush, Jeremy, didn't know I existed. I did

have a go-to solace, however. The Sims video games were very popular then and I was hooked. Who needs friends when you can create your own? Jeremy wasn't into me in real life but I could make a Sim version of him that would be! I was proud of my creation and, to celebrate, I figured a makeout session would be in order. Unfortunately for my little heart, the Sims Jeremy I had lovingly created still wasn't into me and wouldn't make out with my Sims form. I dealt with this how any mature teenager would. I drowned Sims Jeremy in my Sims swimming pool and, every Valentine's Day, I remember him.”

— Megan Therese



“I couldn't get anyone to cover my closing shift at Taco Bell on Valentine's Day, so I just quit my job to hang out with my girlfriend.”

— Edward Emmerich

# Abnormal Valentine's Day ahead for floral industry in limbo

By SEAN BRADLEY

In a normal year, B/A Florist in East Lansing would be producing 10 times as many products ahead of Valentine's Day, the biggest day of the year for the business and the floral industry as a whole.

But not in 2021.

This year, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic — and Valentine's Day falling on a Sunday — has cut down on production of floral designs and orders from customers.

For instance, there will only be up to 10 "Yours Truly" floral designs that feature red and pink roses, down from the usual 25, according to owner Laurie VanArk. The same can be said for nearly all of the company's floral designs, as the business is being conservative with the number of designs it makes this year, she said.

"I really don't know what this year's going to be like," VanArk said.

The pandemic has brought both positives and negatives to the business, VanArk said. She's worked full time at B/A Florist since 1984 with her mother, who opened the business.

On one hand, B/A Florist — and the industry itself — is already set up to do deliveries, which it was doing before the pandemic made them mandatory and contactless.

On the other hand, customers often browse the shop to find other items such as cards and candy that they want to add to their flower order.

"We've totally lost all that. The inventory is not rotating like it normally would," VanArk said.

But in place of people browsing the shop in person, the company's website has been a go-to for customers.

"Our website has really exploded in growth," VanArk said.

## Smith Floral and Greenhouses

1124 E. Mt. Hope Ave., Lansing  
Open for walk-ins  
Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Call (517) 484-5327 or visit smithfloral.com for more info

## B/A Florist

1424 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing  
Pickups and delivery only  
Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Sunday for delivery orders  
Call (517) 351-4484 or visit bafloristonline.com for more info

## Petra Flowers

315 W. Grand River Ave., East Lansing  
Call (517) 336-6991 or visit petraflowers.com for more info

Haslett resident Steve Shine said he usually gets good suggestions from floral shops including B/A Florist about what to buy his wife, Melinda, for holidays, including Valentine's Day.

"The florists do a great job. With a little bit of something, they can put together a nice bouquet," Shine said. "Michigan has a pretty strong floral industry, on the west side of the state especially."

The number of sales from last-minute shoppers has decreased as much as 20% for the week of Valentine's Day from the previous year, said Maher Mahmoud, owner of Smith Floral and Greenhouses.

Orders by customers, and sales in the supply chain from plant growers that sell to shops — not to mention transporters and other entities that get flowers from point A to point B — has caused the multi-billion dollar, worldwide industry to slow growth considerably, according to industry website Floraldaily.com.

The website indicates retail florist sales dropped to \$7.2 billion worldwide in 2020, down from \$7.7 billion in 2019.



Sean Bradley/City Pulse

Laurie VanArk, owner of B/A Florist in East Lansing, clips red roses for a special design on sale for Valentine's Day.

Last year, weddings, homecomings, graduations, proms and other events that would have been decorated with floral arrangements were canceled. Much of that is happening again in 2021 as the pandemic continues.

Since the start of the pandemic, Smith Floral and Greenhouses has shifted to having limited in-store hours and curbside pickup for orders.

Another floral business owned by Mahmoud is Petra Flowers in East Lansing, which is only taking online orders for delivery.

Mahmoud said the upcoming holiday is one people are looking forward to.

"People are looking for some kind of routine," he said.

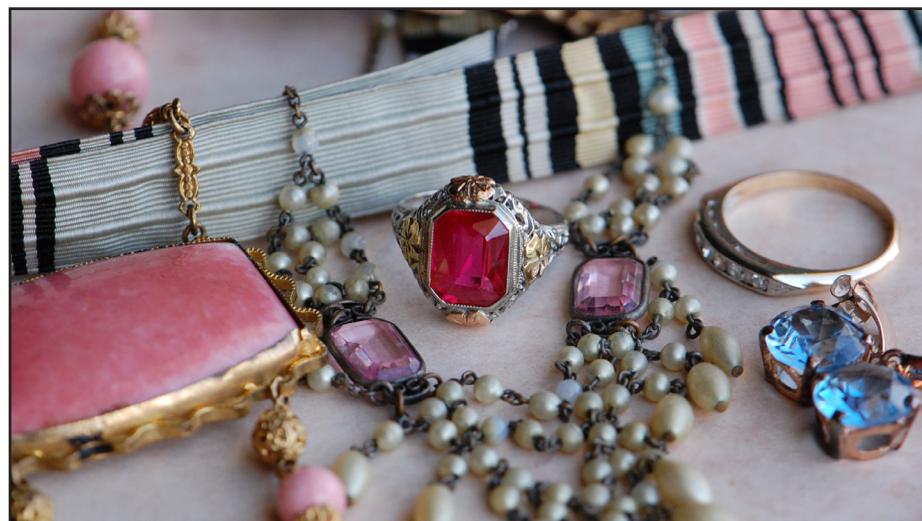
The shop is preparing a special arrangement package for sale consisting of roses, a stuffed animal and chocolates.

Laura Nicols, floral designer at Smith Floral and Greenhouses, creates six designs per hour or more, especially as it gets closer to busy holidays such as Valentine's Day.

She said an impact on the business has been some delays in flower distributors' getting flowers to them on time since the start of the pandemic due to certain travel restrictions.

Another, more positive impact has been that people who have ordered online have left large tips, up to 65% of their order. Nichols said she feels good about the future of the floral industry since it pays great attention to detail for floral designs.

"You're not going to be able to duplicate what we do in a cash-and-carry environment," Nicols said. "It's still a lot of fun to create something beautiful that somebody's going to like."



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JEANJEANVINTAGE.COM

# Not just anchor desk theater

By DAVID WINKELSTERN

When Henrik Ibsen wrote “A Doll’s House” in 1879, he had no idea his play would become a lasting symbol of feminist empowerment. Ibsen certainly never conceived that his script would end up on a Zoom computer program.

## “A Doll’s House”

\$20  
Feb. 12 - 14  
Viewable on  
Riverwalktheatre.com

Riverwalk’s streamed version of “A Doll’s House” goes beyond the usual boundaries of Zoom. Its production isn’t just another example of “anchor desk theatre.”

Friday, Saturday and Sunday performances remain for the unique Riverwalk show. A ticket allows access for a singular device during the time of the viewing purchased. Like a real play, there is no pausing or rewinding.

Director Brian Farnham — with significant technical and editing help from Matt Ottinger — created a Zoom adaptation of “A Doll’s House” that offers more than individual panels with talking heads. Two Christmas trees are melded to appear as one. A key is “exchanged” from one character to another. Separate rooms look like one.

A fluid dance performance by Rachel Daugherty, choreographed by Amanda Tollstam, reveals graceful head-to-toe movements that are remarkable for a Zoom show. As Nora, Daugherty gives a forceful performance reminiscent of a young Joan Crawford.

With classy period costumes by

Amanda Macomber, the six cast members make us forget they are acting in front of a computer screen.

Jace Harper portrays Nora’s mostly clueless husband, Torvald. As the mandatory villain in the melodrama, Joe Clark is believable. Kate Dickenson is Clark’s real-life fiancé. She confidently plays Christine, an old flame. Bob Purosky suits the role of a doctor who speaks in riddles and metaphors.

With the help of a massive wig, Abbie Tykocki plays both the maid and nurse to children we never see. Although Ibsen seemed to comprehend a woman’s plight, his sensitivity didn’t extend to children treated as if they were inconsequential.

“A Doll’s House” tells the story of a married lady who illegally obtains a loan — based on a real Norwegian woman Ibsen met in 1871. Nora mirrors Laura Peterson, who borrowed money to help her ailing husband. The harsh treatment she suffered, including being committed briefly to an asylum, made Ibsen reflect on how women can’t be independent in a world run by men.

In his notes for “A Doll’s House,” Ibsen wrote, “A woman cannot be herself in modern society with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess female conduct from a male standpoint.”

The three-act play runs just under two hours with an intermission. Farnham keeps the dialogue moving so the play never seems to slog.

There are times when actors look the wrong way, microphone levels vary and



Rachel Daugherty dressed as Nora in “A Doll’s House.”

Courtesy

there are no attempts for actors to look toward each other. The well-rehearsed cast, clear images and Daugherty’s performance make such complaints seem less important.

Besides, Riverwalk’s “A Doll’s House” is a respectable replica of the live theater I (and so many others) am hungry for. Perhaps it’s foolish to quibble about the menu.

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Same-day Delivery Available

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Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.





# Old northside bowling alley grows purple pot with a punch

## Two decadent new strains from the newly rebranded Pure Options

By KYLE KAMINSKI

Last month, two local pot shops disappeared from — and then quickly reappeared in — Lansing.

PG Group — a local cannabis company that has long operated a glitzy Pennsylvania Avenue dispensary on Lansing’s south side — expanded its Pure Options moniker to its two other locations, rebranding Old 27 Wellness and Stateside Wellness into one unified nameplate.

It’s the same stores and the same employees. Old 27 Wellness is just now known as Pure Options North; Stateside as Pure Options East. But their dank product lineup is always evolving.

Stocking much of the shelves is PG Group’s cultivation arm, Pro Gro, based in the old Pro Bowl building on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. More than 10,000 plants can legally grow inside.

The latest harvest: Two entirely purple strains that were among the most flavor-



**Lansterdam in Review: Pure Options North**

2905 N. East St.  
Lansing  
(517) 708-7090

**Pure Options East**

1900 E. Kalamazoo St.  
Lansing  
(517) 918-6932  
pureoptions.com

ful and heavy hitting varieties of recreational bud that I’ve been able to find on the Greater Lansing market.

**Pro Gro — Gello**

**Price — \$50/3.5g**

**THC content — 31.57%**

They say THC content isn’t everything. They’re mostly right. Still, I have to pay some respect to companies that manage to get their numbers testing this high. We’re tipping into low-grade concentrate territory past 30%. Novice smokers should probably take it easy on this variety.

Heavy berry notes with an almost lilac-like floral aroma burst from the jar. Dark green with a touch of purple. Medium-sized buds were dense and coated in orange hairs and trichomes. Dry, yet perfect for a joint with a full-bodied smoke.



The berry notes shifted into an earthier sort of pine vibe after the first few hits. This strain leans indica but doesn’t hit with immediate sedation.

Don’t be fooled by the THC levels. One joint of this stuff is perfect for a wake-and-bake that won’t leave you on the couch for the rest of the afternoon. Unfortunately, there’s still not much to do during the pandemic, so I filled my time by eating a \$30 breakfast order from Doordash.

An eighth for \$50 isn’t bad, but Pure Options doesn’t warn you about the extra munchie costs.

**Pro Gro — Gelato 33**

**Price — \$50/3.5g**

**THC content — 27.82%**

Much like the Gello, Gelato 33 carries a very sweet, fruitlike aroma — think grapes, strawberries, maybe a touch of lime. It almost reminded me of Fruit Stripe gum. The medium-sized buds were dense and not overly dry. This batch was also entirely purple.

Nicknamed “Larry Bird,” this strain is a cross between Sunset Sherbert and Thin Mint GSC — designed to provide a “soothing body buzz with a euphoric head high that won’t get in the way of



accomplishing daily activities,” according to the Pure Options website. I have to say: Ditto.

This dessert-like strain packs an immediate punch, but it was nothing that immobilized me. I rolled up a joint for a late afternoon dog walk and took a few puffs out in the middle of the woods at a gorgeous but undisclosed location in Lansing. About 10 minutes later, I had a dumb smile on my face as I strolled back home — uplifted, social and ready to kick back for the Super Bowl.

This is the kind of energetic bud that tends to make me overly chatty, which isn’t always a helpful side effect during the pandemic. Still, it was also a major throwback that gave me a euphoric sort of feeling that truly reminded me of one of the first few times I’ve ever smoked.

*Kyle Kaminski is City Pulse’s managing editor and cannabis enthusiast who has been smoking marijuana just about every day for the last decade. Every week, Kaminski samples some of the best cannabis products available in Greater Lansing, gets real high and writes about them.*

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# Valentine's Day is February 14

ORDER EARLY!

# Tense series of thriller books sees a vet become the hero

By **BILL CASTANIER**

Veterinarian Ron Erskine knows a good story when he hears it. His second book, “Prometheus Scorned,” which features hero Malcolm Cromarty, weaves a complex tale involving greed, an arsonist and the Pennsylvania Amish community.

Erskine, who recently retired from the Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine, said his riveting mystery is an amalgam of an arsonist from the ’80s in Hubbardston, Michigan, and an arsonist from Pennsylvania, where he worked among the Amish community as a young veterinarian.

In writing the book, he extensively consulted firefighters and an insurance adjuster who specialized in barn fires.

His research shows in his compelling descriptions of barn fires, which are unlike other building fires in their intensity due to the inflammable contents and the animals that board there. The two dynamics make for a dangerous and often uncontrollable situation.

In one example, he explains how often animals saved from a barn fire will rush back into the conflagration.

It’s in Erskine’s vivid descriptions of the hard day-to-day work with unpredictable farm animals — and their even more unpredictable Amish owners — that the book routinely soars.

Erskine said he learned a lot from writing his first Cromarty book, “Castings Demons Into Swine.”

“I hopefully learned how to write fiction and lose some habits of a science journal writer,” he said.

Erskine said many of the situations in the book are based on real occurrences he experienced working as vet.

“I tried to capture the mayhem of a barn fire in a whole different world. It’s a reflection of what happens when untold forces, this time an arsonist, and how a small community responds,” he said.

Erskine said the book’s drama doesn’t rely on high-tech. “There are no black helicopters circling overhead,” he said.

It does however emphasize the divide between people who live in rural communities and those who live in urban areas.

In doing his research, Erskine said he learned that most arsonists are not pyromaniacs and that most fires are



Courtesy

Author Ron Erskine.

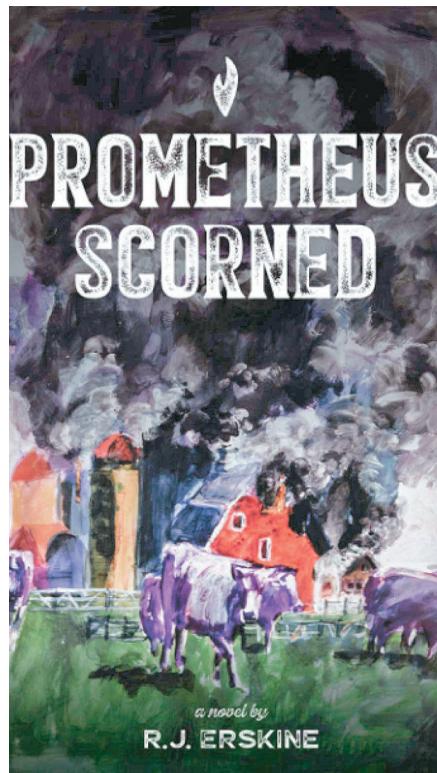
set for reasons of revenge, fraud and family strife.

The strength of “Prometheus Rising” is it pulls the reader into the discovery of the motive for the fires, which will lead to the identification of the arsonist. Its not an easy solution, and Erskine draws it out to a dramatic and dangerous solution.

In his new book Erskine introduces several new characters, including an insurance investigator who becomes his new paramour and an enigmatic teenager who can talk to animals and might be the arsonist.

Once again, the book set in the ’80s, offers tantalizing details about the ways of Amish farmers, including their reliance on hexes.

“My next book featuring the ama-



teur veterinarian detective will delve more deeply into Amish witchcraft stories, which I observed as a young veterinarian,” Erskine said. “There will be bit more magical reality in the next book.”

But Erskine said his next book won’t turn into a “Harry Potter” and will be mostly grounded in the realm of science.

Erskine said he and his spouse, Tina, have enjoyed watching the new seven-part series adaptation of James Herriot’s “All Creatures Great and Small,” which follows a young vet in ’30s Yorkshire England. The original series, which ran from the ’70s into the ’90s, showed the era’s stark political divide between urban and rural areas.

“I absolutely love them. Many vets and myself were influenced by Herriot’s romanticized version of the life of a veterinarian: dropping by a farm, stopping by a pub and having a beer,” he said.

The reality was more akin to getting kicked in the shin by a cow.

As soon as spring comes, Lansing residents might notice Erskine’s 1963 Chevy truck driving around Lansing. It’s painted like a cow, so it’s pretty hard to miss.

## SCHULER BOOKS

Meridian Mall · Okemos

### VIRTUAL EVENTS

Author Talks · Storytimes  
Attend an event without leaving home!

### SCHOLASTIC PARENTS NIGHT

Keeping Kids Engaged as Readers!  
February 10 · 7pm

With so many TV shows, video games, and other things to do, how can we help kids get excited about picking up a book—and continue reading it?

At Scholastic Parents Night: Keeping Kids Engaged as Readers, a panel of Scholastic authors, editors and education experts will answer your burning questions on how to engage kids with books, build their skills, and grow their confidence.

### WEEKLY STORYTIMES

for kids on Facebook LIVE  
Saturdays · 11am

Jump into the pages of our favorite books! We will sing songs, make a craft and go on a new adventure.

### POETRY + MUSIC NIGHT WITH GEOFF FIELDS AND EMILEE PETERSMARK

February 17 · 7pm

It’s a great night for a night in as author Geoff Fields shares his new book of poetry, *Unspoken Thoughts of Birds*. He’ll be joined by Emilee Petersmark, its illustrator, and incredibly talented singer/songwriter best known as the co-lead singer of the local indie-folk band The Crane Wives.

### REGISTER FOR VIRTUAL EVENTS ON OUR WEBSITE OR FACEBOOK PAGE:

Facebook.com/SchulerBooks  
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## Curious Book Shop

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The snow is falling....  
and books are calling!

## Archives Book Shop

519 W. Grand River, E. Lansing  
332-8444 Free Parking  
Mon.-Sat. 11-6 pm, Sun. 12-5 pm  
thearchivesbookshop@gmail.com



# Jonesin' Crossword

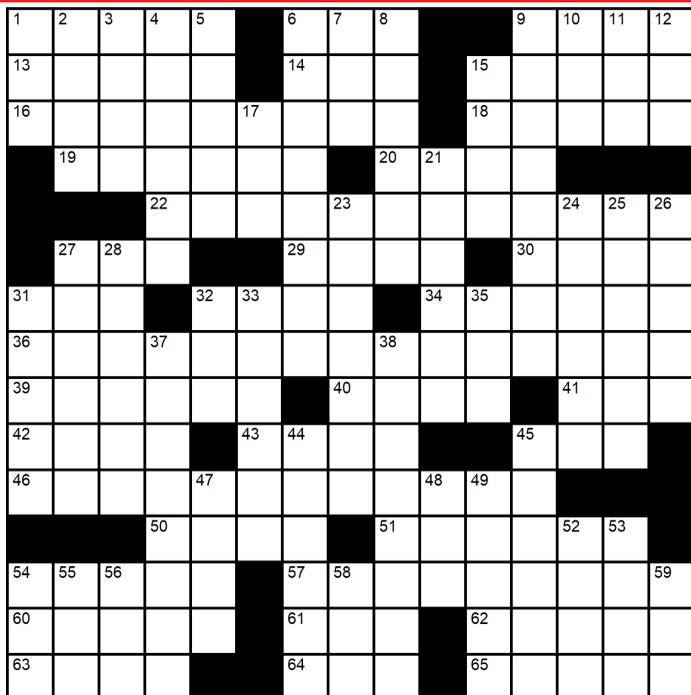
By Matt Jones

"True/False Test"—either way, it's correct.

by Matt Jones

**Across**

- 1 A name by any other name?
- 6 \_\_\_-pitch softball
- 9 Gradually withdraw
- 13 Country singer Griffith
- 14 Place first
- 15 Titular "Pinhead" of comics
- 16 Short, effective set for a stand-up comedian
- 18 Pissed
- 19 Gain again, as trust
- 20 Former Quebecois premier \_\_\_ Levesque
- 22 Cosecant, for one
- 27 "Citizen Kane" studio
- 29 Grant temporary use of
- 30 "Frozen" princess
- 31 Raphael's weapon, in "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles"
- 32 Molecule unit
- 34 Held for possible sale, maybe
- 36 Midwestern NBA follower, maybe
- 39 Japanese period for over 250 years (headquartered in what is now Tokyo)
- 40 Oboe, for one
- 41 Suffix for trick
- 42 Leakes of reality TV
- 43 Final Four initials
- 45 Post-apocalyptic zombie series, to fans
- 46 Tank dwellers that need a lot of care
- 50 "Cinderella Man"



- antagonist
- 7 Letters for the 2020 Super Bowl
- 8 Margin in a close game, maybe
- 9 Bugs
- 10 Green-minded org.
- 11 Fitting
- 12 Bill who appears in the 2021 Amazon movie "Bliss"
- 15 Much of a penny
- 17 Part of some three-day weekends, for short
- 21 Belgian salad green
- 23 Artery along the thigh
- 24 "Be back \_\_\_"
- 25 2020 Pixar movie
- 26 Au pair
- 27 Oakland athlete
- 28 Kyoto garment
- 31 Blood flow facilitator
- 32 \_\_\_ Lingus (carrier based in Dublin)
- 33 Techno offshoot big in the 1990s
- 35 Ryerson who shows up (again!) during repeat
- viewings of "Groundhog Day"
- 37 Traffic noise
- 38 How some flat, green insects are described
- 44 Oldest ever U.S. ex-president
- 45 It's still a good idea to get a shot for it
- 47 Pet food brand
- 48 The Lightning Seeds lead singer Broudie
- 49 Wanda of "Curb Your Enthusiasm"
- 52 Mass movement of viewers to another Twitch stream
- 53 Air France assets, once
- 54 Magazine with a final print issue in 2018
- 55 Mineral-rich source
- 56 Quick swim
- 58 "Pay attention!"
- 59 Scottish mystery writer Josephine

**Down**

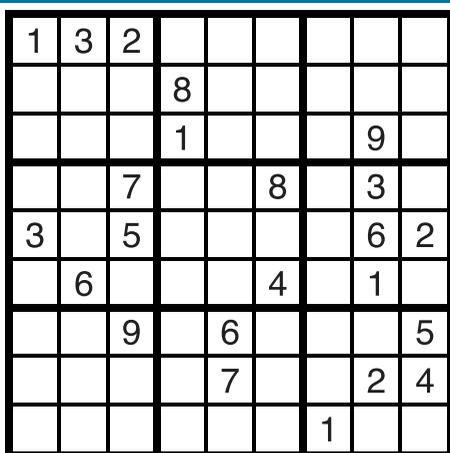
- 1 Colony resident
- 2 Dragon's den
- 3 "Picnic" playwright
- 4 Really wish you could
- 5 Instrument that can play quarter tones
- 6 Refrain for a "sweet chariot"

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Answers on page 24

# SUDOKU

# Advanced



## TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every row, column, and outlined 3-by-3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 exactly once. No guessing is required. The solution is unique.

Answers on page 24

# Free Will Astrology

By Rob Brezshny

February 10-16, 2021

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** Author Anton Chekhov made a radical proposal: "Perhaps the feelings we experience when we are in love represent a normal state. Being in love shows people who they should be." In accordance with astrological potentials, my beloved Aries darling, I invite you to act as if Chekhov's proposal were absolutely true for at least the next two weeks. Be animated by a generous lust for life. Assume that your intelligence will reach a peak as you express excited kindness and affectionate compassion. Be a fount of fond feelings and cheerful empathy and nourishing ardor.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** Poet and filmmaker Jean Cocteau told the following story about Taurus composer Erik Satie (1866-1925). When Satie died, his old friends, many of whom were highly accomplished people, came to visit his apartment. There they discovered that all the letters they had sent him over the years were unopened. Satie had never read them! How sad that he missed out on all that lively exchange. I beg you not to do anything that even remotely resembles such a lack of receptivity during the coming weeks, Taurus. In fact, please do just the opposite: Make yourself as open as possible to engagement and influence. I understand that the pandemic somewhat limits your social interactions. Just do the best you can.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** On behalf of the cosmic omens, I demand that the important people in your life be reliable and generous toward you in the coming weeks. You can tell them I said so. Tell them that you are doing pretty well, but that in order to transform pretty well into very well, you need them to boost their support and encouragement. Read them the following words from author Alan Cohen: "Those who love you are not fooled by mistakes you have made or dark images you hold about yourself. They remember your beauty when you feel ugly; your wholeness when you are broken; your innocence when you feel guilty; and your purpose when you are confused."

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** For a while, poet Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) was the sexual partner of Cancerian novelist George Sand (1804-1876), also known as Aurore Dupin. He said that after intense love-making sessions, he would fall asleep and wake up to find her sitting at her desk, engrossed in working on her next book. Maybe the erotic exchange inspired her creativity? In accordance with current astrological potentials, I recommend Sand's approach to you. Vigorous pleasure will coordinate well with hard work. As will deep release with strong focus. As will tender intimacy with clear thinking. (PS: I know your options for pleasure and intimacy may be somewhat limited because of the pandemic. Call on your ingenuity and resourcefulness to work the best magic possible.)

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** Leo poet Warsan Shire suggests, "Document the moments you feel most in love with yourself—what you're wearing, who you're around, what you're doing. Recreate and repeat." This would be an excellent exercise for you to carry out during this Valentine season. You're in a phase when you're likely to enhance your lovability and attract extra support simply by intensifying and refining the affectionate compassion you feel and express toward yourself.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** I wish the pandemic would give us a short break so we could celebrate the Valentine season with maximum sensual revelry and extravagant displays of joyful tenderness. I wish we could rip off our masks and forget about social-distancing and hug and kiss everyone who wants to be hugged and kissed. But that's not going to happen. If we hope to be free to indulge in a Lush Love and Lust Festival by Valentine Season in 2022, we've got to be cautious and controlled now. And we are all counting on you Virgos to show us how to be as wildly, lyrically romantic as possible while still observing the necessary limitations. That's your special task.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Author Raymond Carver wrote, "It ought to make us feel ashamed when we talk like we know what we're talking about when we talk about love." That seems like a harsh oversimplification to me. Personally, I think it's fun and interesting to pretend we know what we're talking about when we talk about love. And I think that will be especially true for you in the coming weeks. In my astrological opinion, you should be discussing love extensively and boldly and imaginatively. You should redefine what love means to you. You should re-evaluate how you express it and reconfigure the way it works in your life.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** I'm turning over this horoscope to psychologist John Welwood. His words are the medicine you need at this juncture in the evolution of intimacy. Study the following quote and interpret it in ways that help illuminate your relationship with togetherness: "A soul connection is a resonance between two people who respond to the essential beauty of each other's individual natures, behind their facades, and who connect on this deeper level. This kind of mutual recognition provides the catalyst for a potent alchemy. It is a sacred alliance whose purpose is to help both partners discover and realize their deepest potentials."

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Transform yourself with the sweetest challenge you can dream up. Give yourself a blessing that will compel you to get smarter and wilder. Dazzle yourself as you dare to graduate from your history. Rile yourself up with a push to become your better self, your best self, your amazingly fulfilled and masterful self. Ask yourself to leap over the threshold of ordinary magic and into the realm of spooky good magic. And if all that works out well, Sagittarius, direct similar energy toward someone you care about. In other words, transform them with the sweetest challenge you can dream up. Dare them to graduate from their history. And so on.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** I invite you to compose a message to a person you'd like to be closer to and whom you're sure would like to be closer to you. Be inspired by what poet Clementine von Radics wrote to the man she was dating, telling him why she thought they could start living together. Here's her note: "Because you texted me a haiku about the moon when you were drunk. Because you cried at the end of the movie \*Die Hard\* on Christmas eve. Because when I'm sick you bring me fruit, kiss me on the mouth, and hold me even though I'm gross. Because you bring me flowers for no reason but on Valentine's Day you gave me a bouquet of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Because every time I show you a poem I love you've read it already."

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** I've adopted some lines from poet Walt Whitman for you to use in composing a love note. Send it to a person you know and love, or to a person you want to know and love, or a person you will know and love in the future. Here it is: "We are oaks growing in the openings side by side. We are two fishes swimming together. We are two predatory hawks, soaring above and looking down. We are two clouds driving overhead. We are seas mingling, two cheerful waves rolling over each other. We are snow, rain, cold, darkness. We circle and circle till arriving home again, voiding all but freedom and our own joy."

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** "To heal is to touch with love that which was previously touched by fear," wrote author Stephen Levine. I propose you make this theme a keynote for your best relationships in the coming days. What can you do to alleviate the anxiety and agitation of the people you care for? How might they do the same for you? If you play along with the cosmic rhythms, you will have extraordinary power to chase away fear with love.

# TURN IT DOWN!

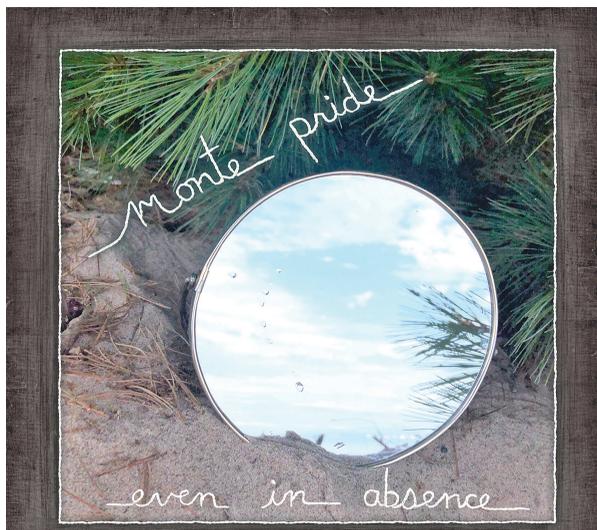
Loud dispatches from Lansing's music scene

BY RICH TUPICA

TURN IT DOWN! CATCHING UP WITH MONTE PRIDE



Monte Pride has been a Lansing folk fixture since 2013 (courtesy photo)



Monte Pride's 2021 "Even in Absence" LP.



Monte Pride performs live. (photo by Frank Vargas)

## Lansing folkie looks back at 2020 and forward to next album

At this point, it's still too early to tell when live music will return and music venues will revive. With that in mind, Turn it Down! will be checking in with local musicians to see what they're doing to keep active during the pandemic. The first of this series features local folk troubadour Monte Pride.

Since his teenage years, a laundry list of songwriting icons has steadily provided stimuli for Pride's own growing songbook. His record collection includes LPs from Townes Van Sandt, Nick Drake, John Prine, Jackson Browne and Joni Mitchell—plus newer albums from a favorite of his: The Tallest Man on Earth. And while Pride's rustic sound tastefully echoes those inspirations, it's delivered in his own authentic style. Since his first time on stage at a 2013 (at a high school talent show), to his first "real gig" at the opening of the Old Town General Store later that same year, Pride has steadily become a fixture in the Lansing scene.

**Looking back to last year, in what ways did the pandemic affect your music? When was your last real show?**

My last show was on March 7,

2020, at the Kalamazoo Fretboard Festival, just before the pandemic officially began. I had no idea it would be my last live performance for over a year, but it was a really special one to end on. I was looking forward to a busy spring and summer schedule in support of my album "Even in Absence" that was set to release in mid-April. When the pandemic hit, I made the decision to postpone the release of the new album to August. I hoped that everything would turn around by then, but quickly realized it would be a while. I ended up doing an album release livestream, and though it wasn't anything like an in-person show, it felt great to finally get music that I worked so hard on out into the world.

There's been an incredible mountain of emotion to process through the last year or so, but I think it's a part of the job of musicians and other artists to do that work, creating things that might help others process or cope with everything going on around us. I felt lucky to have the chance to do that in releasing "Even in Absence," giving listeners something that might help them through

such a hard year, even if just a little. Also, though the songs were written well before the pandemic, I felt that album's theme and sentiment were even more pertinent in 2020.

**Has the pandemic affected your songwriting?**

Definitely. Early on, having so much free time for the first time in a very long time allowed space to finish a few old ideas and have a few new ones trickle out, but things stalled for a few months as the reality of everything set in. I got out of that slump, somehow, and have written enough songs that I'm happy with for a third album. I plan to start chipping away at that third album this year. I've also been dreaming of recording an album of covers from other Michigan artists.

**So far, what have you been up to in the new year?**

I've mainly been working remotely, writing songs when they come, and booking a few safe, outdoor shows for this summer. I'm incredibly excited and feel lucky to have the opportunity to cautiously return to performing a bit. I turned down a handful of things in 2020, and feel that I needed to see folks pull off safe, distanced

outdoor shows to feel comfortable doing it myself. I've also built a small home-recording rig, and hope to start producing some of my own music.

**When and how did you first get into songwriting?**

My interest started early. I recently found a few notebooks from elementary school with song ideas, attempted lyrics and band names. I started writing songs in late high school, but didn't get deep into it until college. I guess it just felt like something I needed to do. It was something that came easy to me, and though the early songs weren't very good, I immediately felt the magic, mystery, and catharsis of the process.

I've found that forcing my songwriting at all is futile, and that my favorite songs have always come naturally, in flow. I tend to have no idea where these songs come from, and sometimes don't even know their meaning. The feeling of all of this keeps me hungry, doing what I can to keep myself in a space to capture these ideas when they come.

**Listen at [montepride.bandcamp.com](https://montepride.bandcamp.com) or wherever you stream music.**

# OUT ON THE TOWN

Events must be entered through the calendar at [lansingcitypulse.com](http://lansingcitypulse.com). Deadline is 5 p.m. Wednesdays for the following week's issue. Charges may apply for paid events to appear in print. If you need assistance, please call Suzi at (517) 999-6704.

## Wednesday, February 10

**A Virtual Visit with Abraham Lincoln:** Slavery, Emancipation & Equality - Visit with the 16th President of the United States! 11 a.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

**Allen Farmers Market** - We are back at 1629 E. Kalamazoo! 3-6:30 p.m. 517-999-3911.

**Battle of the Books Virtual Author Visit with Jennifer A. Nielsen** - author of The False Prince, via Zoom for a book chat and Q&A! 6:30-7:15 p.m. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

**Future Present Exhibition** - MSU's Science Gallery Detroit debuts exhibition in E. Broad Art Lab, 565 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing, through April 11th. Info and reservations: [detroit.sciencegallery.com](http://detroit.sciencegallery.com).

**MiLibrary Quest Mystery Edition** - A thief plans to steal a Michigan landmark on Valentine's Day! Who? What? Where? All week. Grand Ledge Area District Library, 131 E Jefferson St, Grand Ledge. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

**Suncatcher Kits** - Stop by our vestibule for a suncatcher craft! 25 kits will be available. 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Eaton Rapids Area District Library, 220 S. Main, Eaton Rapids.

**Threads of Wisdom:** Book of Shadows - Join us on Zoom. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Weavers of the Web. [weaversoftheweb.org](http://weaversoftheweb.org).

**Volunteer Coaches Needed** - Girls On the Run needs 200 volunteer coaches by March 1. For more info about coaching and Girls on the Run of Mid Michigan, visit [gotrmidmichigan.org/Coach](http://gotrmidmichigan.org/Coach).

## Thursday, February 11

**Editing the Human Genome** - This presentation is part of the Great Lakes Lectures series. 7-8 p.m. [bookings.lib.msu.edu](http://bookings.lib.msu.edu)

**Myths & Legends** - Join us on our YouTube Channel to explore myths, legends and fairy tales from many cultures. 11-11:30 a.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

**Online Event: Artist Talk - Vessels & Views:** Natural Reality - 12-1 p.m. Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center. [lansingartgallery.org](http://lansingartgallery.org)

**Our Daily Work, Our Daily Lives Brown Bag Series** - 12:15-1:30 p.m. Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum. [broadmuseum.msu.edu](http://broadmuseum.msu.edu).

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 6-7 p.m. [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org)

**Virtual Darwin Discovery Day** - Join us for a virtual celebration of Charles Darwin's birthday and science! 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Michigan State University Museum. [museum.msu.edu](http://museum.msu.edu)

**Virtual Poetry Workshop: Writing the Land** with Laura Apol, Poet Laureate. 1-4:30 p.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org).

**Winter Seed Sowing Workshop** - Join us on Zoom! 1-2:30 p.m. Fenner Nature Center. Info/link at [mynaturecenter.org](http://mynaturecenter.org).

## Friday, February 12

**Courtyard by Marriott Lansing Downtown Grand Opening** - Join us for a virtual ribbon cutting ceremony! 11 a.m.-5 p.m. [facebook.com/CYLansingDowntown](https://facebook.com/CYLansingDowntown)

**Love Potion Lava Lamps** - For Valentine's Day, we'll be making Craft Kits with an easy yet entertaining activity. 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Eaton Rapids Area District Library. [eradl.org](http://eradl.org)

**National Diabetes Prevention Program** - designed to bring an evidence-based lifestyle change program for preventing type 2 diabetes. Go to [canr.msu.edu](http://canr.msu.edu) for zoom link.

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 7:30-8:30 p.m. [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org)

**Rev. Robert B. Jones and Sister Bernice Jones Audio**- From the Archives. [tenpoundfiddle.org](http://tenpoundfiddle.org).

**Virtual Preschool Family Storytime** - Listen, play & sing along virtually on our YouTube channel. 11-11:30 a.m. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

**Virtual Trivia Challenge from KaHoot!** - Join us at GLADL for fun trivia challenges! 4-11:45 p.m. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org).

## Saturday, February 13

**Chicken Dinner** - Curbside only pickup. Okemos Masonic Center, 2175 Hamilton Rd, Okemos, will be holding their famous Chicken Dinner. 3:30-5:30 p.m.

**Digital Naturalist: Winter Seed Sowing Workshop** - Join us on Zoom! 1 p.m. Fenner Nature Center. [mynaturecenter.org/](http://mynaturecenter.org/)

**DIY Drum Machines** - 10 a.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr, Lansing. 517-485-8116. [impression5.org](http://impression5.org).

**Free Online Valentine's Roast of Twilight** - 9 p.m. [frontrowfilmroast.com](http://frontrowfilmroast.com).

**Laura Stevenson | Sit Rest (At Home) Livestream** - 8 p.m. [macsbar.com](http://macsbar.com).

**Make It! Think Tank Workshops** -for ages 9-14. 7-9 a.m. Impression 5 Science Center, 200 Museum Dr. Register: [impression5.org](http://impression5.org)

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 10:30-11:30 a.m. [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org)

**Virtual Darwin Discovery Day** - Join us MSU Museum for a virtual celebration of Charles Darwin's birthday and science! 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. [museum.msu.edu](http://museum.msu.edu)

**Virtual Poetry Workshop: Writing the Land** with Laura Apol, Lansing's Poet Laureate - . 1-3 p.m. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

## Monday, February 15

**Jump Into Reading** - Join Ms. Anna on our youtube channel. 11-11:30 a.m. Eaton Rapids Area District Library. [eradl.org](http://eradl.org)

**Refuge Recovery Lansing (Virtual)** - 6-7 p.m. [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org)

## Tuesday, February 16

**Battle of the Books Virtual Book Chat** - A fun and casual discussion of this year's Battle Books. Registration required. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Grand Ledge Area District Library. [gladl.org](http://gladl.org)

**Cyber Security and Social Engineering:** Protect yourself online. 7-8 p.m. Eaton Rapids Area District Library. Reg. required. [eradl.org](http://eradl.org)

**Encompass Series Celebrating Black History Month: Trapped Trauma: The Art of Protest** 7-9 p.m. [bookings.lib.msu.edu](http://bookings.lib.msu.edu)

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8	5	6	1	4	2	7	9	3
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# FOOD & DRINK

## DINING OUT IN GREATER LANSING

### Chocolate loves coffee

By Ari LeVAUX

In the middle of the night, part-way through a cross-country drive, I unfolded myself from the driver's seat at another random gas station. Someone special was waiting at the east end of Interstate 90, but the rig and I both needed fuel.

As sure as diesel hum at a truck stop, there is a chocolate muffin in the store. It's wrapped in clear cellophane and called "Double Chocolate Muffin," or "Chocolate-Chocolate-Chunk Muffin," or something along those lines, depending on which semi-local bakery made it.

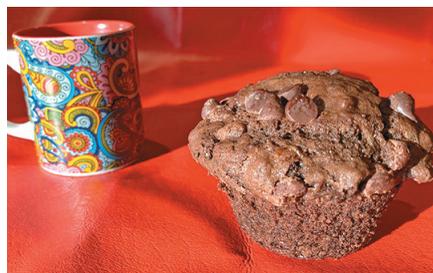
Anywhere else, the gas station chocolate muffin might be as forgettable as one highway mile after the last. But our expectations are low at the gas station, and our needs are specific. Enjoyed with a steaming cup of gas station coffee, that dark, chemical-



ly moist and shiny chocolate muffin keeps us trucking all the way to the next pit stop.

Not as powerful a stimulant as caffeine, it lasts longer, and eases the jittery feelings that caffeine alone can give. There is evidence theobromine improves cognitive function, while reducing the risk of Alzheimer's and cardiovascular diseases.

Cacao famously contains high levels of phenylalanine, which releases dopamine and norepinephrine, the endorphins responsible for the ecstasy



of falling in love, and the energy that allows new lovers to talk for hours.

Chocolate also contains endocannabinoids, which human brain cells have special receptors to receive. And what discussion of euphoria would be complete without good old sugar, which triggers the release of yet more endorphins, plus giving you a sugar high, while dulling the bitter flavors of both chocolate and coffee. Luckily, theobromine also protects against tooth decay.

I got off I90 in Newton, Massachusetts, and drove through the outskirts of Boston to my mom's apartment. A few days later we headed for Montana, cup holders full of Dunkin' Donuts coffee, and Dunkin' chocolate muffins in the console, which I incorrectly presumed would be our last best road muffins.

In LaCrosse, Wisconsin, I discovered the gas station chocolate muffin of my dreams, at a regional chain called Kwik Trip. The Kwik Trip muffins are baked in the LaCrosse-based "Kwikery" and distributed throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota. Instead of being hard to find, their muffins are displayed in well-lit cases. I was in love, but alas, I was also in a hurry. I hit as many Kwik Trips as possible before I crossed the South Dakota line and left those lovely Kwik Trip muffins in the rear view mirror.

In Murdo, South Dakota, sometime after midnight, the mask-free convenience store attendant insisted there wasn't a chocolate muffin. I checked by the coffee, and then the refrigerated case where the sandwiches are, and then over by the doughnuts, in front of the corn dogs, and kept going until I finally found that elusive, theobromine-laced asset on the Hostess rack. Not the creme-filled cupcake. The chocolate muffin. When you're in limbo, you don't worry about lowering the bar a little.

She managed to ring me up and take my money without acknowledging me

or my chocolate muffin, most likely annoyed that I'd raided her stash. No matter. I had what I needed to plow through another tank of gas, all the way through that covid-laced wasteland and into the world's greatest state, while my Valentine slept safely in the passenger seat.

#### Double Chocolate Chip Muffins

When I got back to Montana, I reached out to Kwik Trip. I explained that their chocolate chocolate chip muffins are the best, and asked for the recipe. The recipe below is faithfully reprinted as I received it. In private, I double the vanilla, and slip in a tablespoon of mayo, for a tad extra moistness.

Servings: 24 muffins

Ingredients:

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup vegetable oil

1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup granulated sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

1 tsp vanilla extract

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup sour cream

2 cups all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup cocoa powder

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt

2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375°F and line muffin cups with liners (or lightly grease and flour).

In a large bowl, whisk together oil, sugar, and milk. Stir in eggs and vanilla until well-combined.

Gently fold in sour cream until just-combined.

In a separate, medium-sized bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt.

Fold flour mixture gently into wet mixture, folding until just barely combined. Stir in 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chocolate chips.

Scoop chocolate muffin batter into prepared muffin tin, filling  $\frac{2}{3}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way full.

Sprinkle tops of muffins with remaining chocolate chips.

Bake at 375°F for 18 minutes (toothpick inserted in center should come out with few slightly fudgy crumbs).

*Flash in the Pan* is food writer Ari LeVaux's weekly recipe column. It runs in about 100 newspapers nationwide, nourishing food sections large and small with complete protein for the belly brain.

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# East Lansing Food Co-op to return as part of Allen Neighborhood Center

By SKYLER ASHLEY

After years of dormancy following the closure of its storefront in 2017, the East Lansing Food Co-op is working to finalize plans to return this summer as part of the Allen Neighborhood Center. The project, tentatively titled Eastside Lansing Food Co-op, will see the co-op return once again as a functioning grocery store accessible for customers.

ELFCO board president Stephen Gasteyer said the co-op was forced to shutter its Meridian Township location in 2017 thanks to overwhelming competition from larger chain businesses such as Whole Foods.

“We had two options. One was to contact all the members and figure out how to give them back their equity and call it quits. The other was to try and move and open somewhere else,” Gasteyer said.

Gasteyer said the co-op spent a couple of years unsuccessfully trying to open under a new banner at a new location. He added that meetings during this fruitless period featured discussions and suggestions for the co-op’s future that were simply too expensive and ambitious.

The co-op got the ball moving again after reconfiguring its mission to focus on distributing hyper-local goods produced in Greater Lansing, rather than trying to compete with Whole Foods or Better Health Market.

“What has developed in mid-Michigan is a very vibrant local food system. Lots of people produce for the local food market. We have a possible niche as a place that can distribute the local food and products that are being produced right here,” Gasteyer said. “The board decided our vision would be to open a co-op that operated a lot like a seven days a week farmers market.”

The ELFCO board eventually began discussions with Joan Nelson, director of the Allen Neighborhood Center. Nelson told them Allen Neighborhood Center was looking for a grocer as part of its upcoming Allen Place expansion project. That led to ELFCO partnering with Allen Neighborhood Center for its new storefront that is scheduled to open this summer.

“The ANC is at the heart of the local food hub that is the east side of Lansing. We really are very excit-



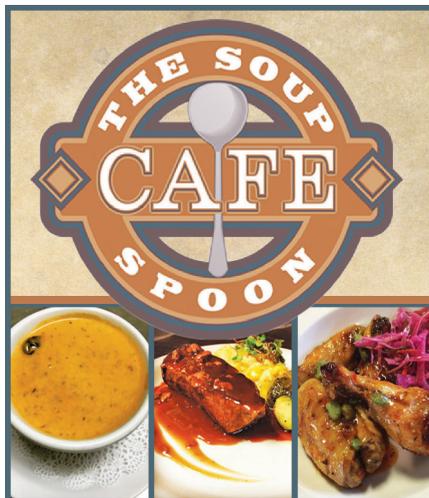
**ELFCO at the Allen Neighborhood Center**

For more information and updates visit [Facebook.com/ELFCO](https://www.facebook.com/ELFCO)

ed for the possibility of opening there and having that symbiotic relationship with local food producers,” Gasteyer said.

Gasteyer added that while the co-op prepares for the final steps to open its Allen Neighborhood Center storefront, the board still needs volunteers. Those interested in lending a helping hand can contact the co-op through its Facebook page at [Facebook.com/ELFCO](https://www.facebook.com/ELFCO).

“We are looking for people that want to contribute both in terms of all-hands-on-deck and in terms of helping us fill out what our vision is,” Gasteyer said. “We see the purpose of a co-op like this as building commu-



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