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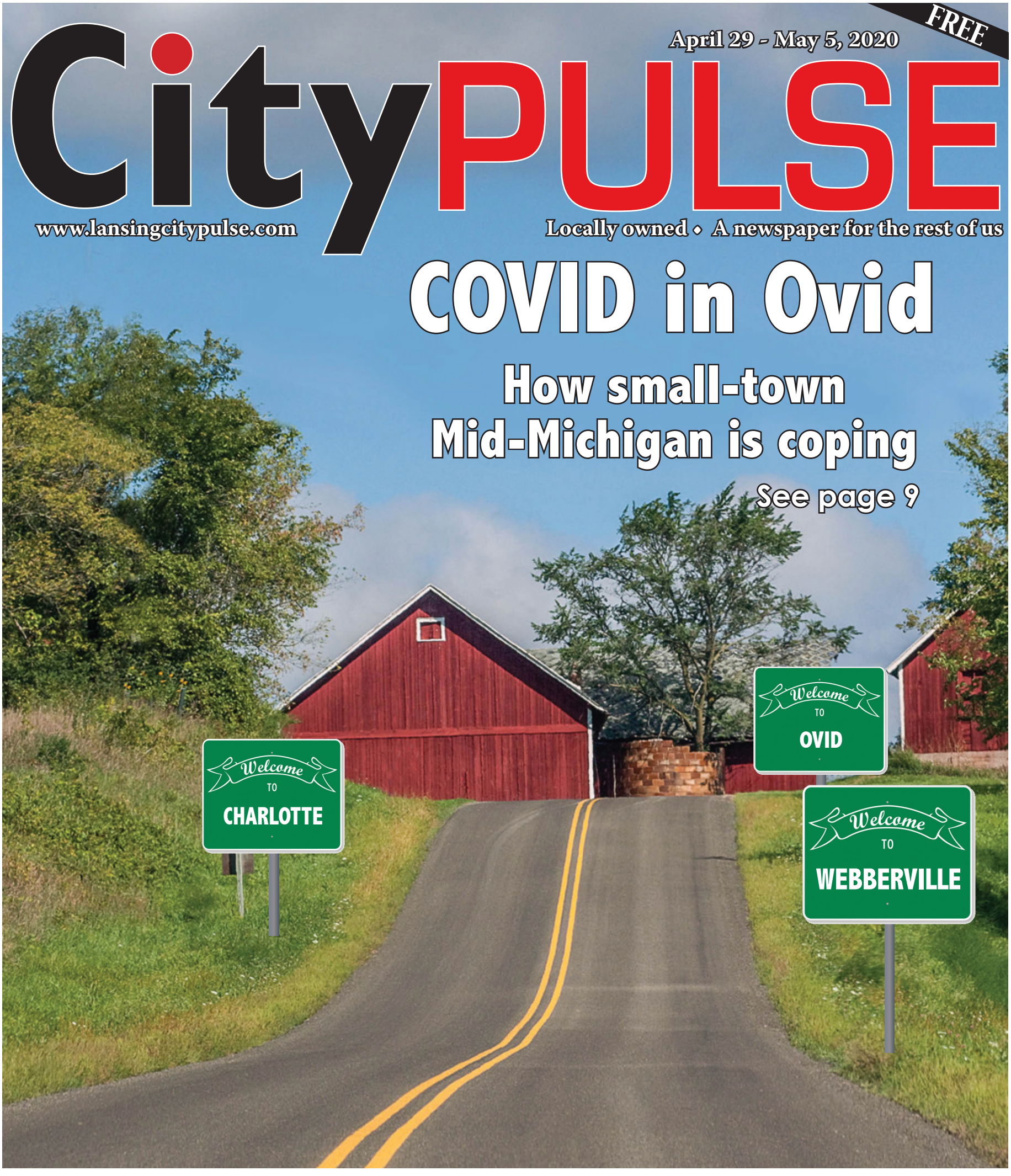

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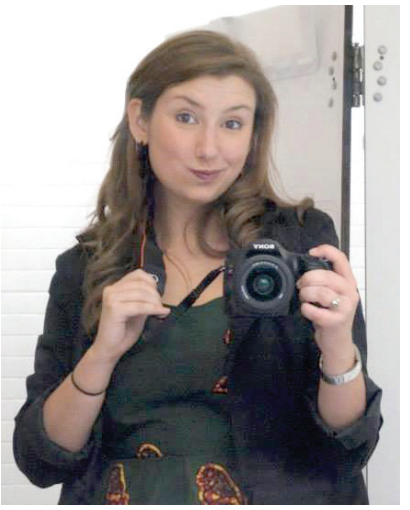
Favorite Things

Charla M. Burnett and her travel-photo collection

Author Charla M. Burnett, 30, now lives on the East Side of Lansing, but she's also spent ample time overseas experiencing far-away cultures. Those adventures are well-documented in her 2019 book, "Memoirs of a Venture Novelist: One Woman's Guide to Travel, Sex and Culture." Here's what the roaming writer chose as a prized possession:



Photos by Charla M. Burnett

It's so hard to just choose just one, but I'd say my favorite thing is my collection of travel photos. I spent much of my 20s working abroad, conducting research on a number of topics. From post-war reconstruction to famine caused by farming subsidies, I worked with some truly amazing people to help solve some of the most pressing issues facing low-to-medium income countries. At some point, I asked my family for a good camera so I could start documenting my travels.

You see, when I was away from Lansing and my entire family for so many years, there seemed to be a growing gap between us. I changed a lot from the things I saw and most significantly from the lessons that other cultures taught me. It was hard for me to explain what I experienced, so I started documenting everything. I now have a hard drive with over 15,000 photographs from over 37 different countries.

I have so many favorites, but I'll share just a few. The first is a photo of the first Gay Pride parade in Jerusalem where there were no direct-violence clashes between the parade attendees and ultra-conservative religious community members. LGBTQ discrimination and violence has been a burden on the region. The year before, one of the attendees was stabbed.



The next photo shows a baby chimpanzee that was brought into my taxi by two men. They tried to convince me the chimp was friendly, even though it kept trying to smack me and pull my hair. "It's our pet," the one man said. Eventually, the taxi driver got so mad and started to kick them out of the taxi. When the two men finally exited the taxi with their chimp, the driver laughed and said, "That's not their pet, they are going to take care of it until it's big and they will eat it."

The last photo is from a seven-person plane above the Caribbean island of Barbuda after Hurricane Irma displaced its inhabitants. I spent an entire summer there, living out of a tent and helping the United Nations and local government remove debris and rebuild. I can still remember the feeling of the warm air on my face and the taste of salt from the Atlantic.

Each photo is not only a memory, but a piece of me. It's a record of the places I've been and the adventures I've had on my journey.

(This interview was edited by Rich Tupica. If you have a suggestion for Favorite Things, email rich@lansingcitypulse.com.

Check out more of Burnett's photos on lansingcitypulse.com)









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Small town café looks forward to reopening



Cover Art

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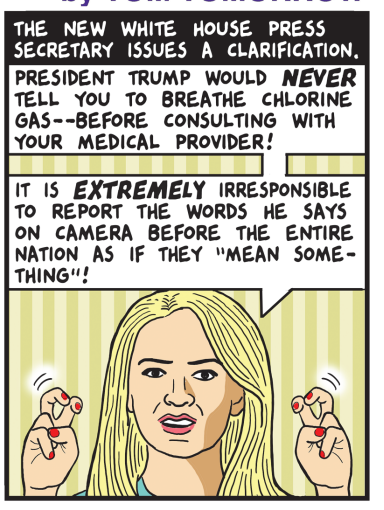
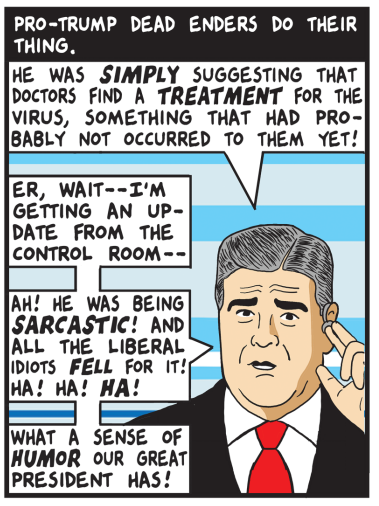
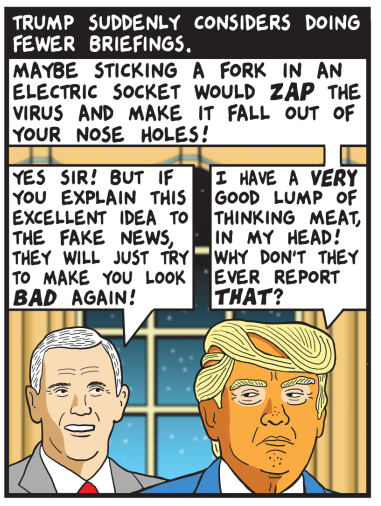
by TOM TOMORROW













PULSE NEWS & OPINION

Over the COVID cliff



As our state and federal governments desperately scramble to create a financial safety net for families and businesses, injecting billions of dollars into the economy through grants, loans and enhanced unemployment benefits, cities across the state and nation are bracing for their own fiscal tsunami.

Cities are on the front lines, providing critical public services like police and fire protection, electric and water service, road and sewer infrastructure, trash pickup and more. Sustaining these essential services is about to get much harder as key municipal revenue sources buckle under the strain of a COVID-induced economic downturn. Many cities, including Lansing, are ill-prepared to weather the approaching storm. Budgets are already under considerable strain for longstanding reasons, especially the rising tide of legacy costs for retiree pensions and health care that together consume nearly one-third of Lansing's general fund resources. Pension fund losses due to the stock market crash make the situation even more precarious.

The coming COVID fiscal cliff represents a formidable challenge for Lansing's leadership team. There is zero chance, for example, that Mayor Andy Schor's commitment to rebuild the city's reserve funds will be possible for the foreseeable future. Already, the dangerously low level of rainy-day funds is likely to have a negative impact on the city's credit rating, making it more expensive to borrow money for infrastructure projects and other vital needs. City employees should brace themselves for the gathering storm, where layoffs loom large and further reductions in benefits like health care and retirement are all but inevitable.

Lansing relies on a three-legged stool of revenue streams to make ends meet: property taxes, income taxes, and state shared revenues. All three are likely to be crunched by COVID, but not all at once. Like the financial wreckage that followed the Great Recession, the full impact will play out in the city's bottom line over the next two to three years. Income taxes will be the first to go due to skyrocketing unemployment, followed by a second shockwave over the next two years as property tax collections decline in tandem with a softer real estate market.

Property taxes account for $43 million — nearly one-third of the city's general fund budget — and income taxes bring in a similar amount. State shared revenues add another $20 million. The latter will likely take a major hit as Governor Whitmer and lawmakers look for ways to divert resources to the COVID crisis response and make up for their own budget shortfalls driven by the loss of state sales, income and business tax revenues. It is possible, if not probable, that Lansing will soon face a budget deficit of $30 million or more — nearly one-quarter of its general fund.

Faced with similar circumstances on the heels of the Great Recession, the Bernero administration was forced to downsize the city workforce by nearly one-third, from more than 1,200 employees in 2008 to just 850 by 2011. For the most part, that leaner staffing level remains in place today — a "new normal" for city government where a lot fewer people do the same amount of work. Another round of downsizing the city workforce will be difficult, if not impossible, while still maintaining essential government functions. To further complicate matters, the police and fire departments together make up more than half of the city budget, making it nearly impossible to deal with major revenue losses without impacting both departments.

There are some glimmers of hope to be found amid the gloom and doom. A robust rebound in business activity and employment (assuming small businesses survive and reopen) should bring sales and income tax revenues back relatively quickly. The dire financial circumstances that will soon hit cities across the state may also spark a long overdue conversation about allowing more options for cities to generate their own revenue, which is constrained by the state's statutory caps on both income and property tax rates. Local or regional sales taxes, commonplace in cities across the country, should certainly be on the table, so long as they require local voter approval. Mayor Schor should also consider negotiating an increase in the Lansing Board of Water & Light's return on equity payment, which has been static for more than five years.

While the federal government is directing some COVID relief to cities like Lansing through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, these revenues are likely to amount to peanuts compared to the mammoth revenue losses careening toward municipal governments. The first tranche of federal aid to cities, approved as part of the CARES Act, excluded cities with a population below 500,000. We urge Michigan's congressional delegation to right this wrong by including smaller cities like Lansing in the next round of federal relief.

Avoiding an all-out financial catastrophe will depend on the willingness of city leaders to make the tough, painful and unpopular decisions that will be necessary to reduce spending and enhance revenues. Failing to make the hard choices now may push Lansing to the brink of the ultimate fiscal cliff — municipal bankruptcy.

Send letters to the editor on this editorial or any other topic to letters@lansingcitypulse.com. Please limit them to 250 words.

CANDY
SEE PAGE 7

COVID-19 to drain millions from Lansing's budget

Budget-balancing layoffs possible amid declining city revenue

Lansing Mayor Andy Schor is expected to slash millions of dollars in annual expenses as the city grapples with decreased state revenues and income taxes amid the COVID-19 pandemic. And that means layoffs or staffing adjustments could be on the horizon, city officials explained.

At this week's City Council meeting, Chief Strategy Officer Shelbi Frayer outlined a series of "scary" budget projections that indicated Lansing could need to trim $1 million to $5 million in expenses to keep the budget balanced and avoid draining the city's entire $6.8 million in rainy-day reserves.

> "It's a worst-case scenario and could mean we need to trim some things, and that could include possible layoffs."
>
> — **Lansing City Council President Peter Sapadafore**



Without structural changes, the city would be operating in the red. And that won't be feasible.

"We wanted to show the Council that without structural changes, we're going to have problems," Frayer explained. "No one wants to talk about layoffs or pay cuts, but with our budget and the size of our payroll, there's really only a few places you can cut. Layoffs are still a last resort."

Schor submitted a budget proposal last month that planned for modest revenue and spending increases, including a $500,000 injection into the city's already dwindling reserve funds. And he warned that the budget would likely change as the coronavirus spreads.

This week, city officials offered a preliminary look at what sorts of changes might be needed.

With fewer businesses open and less income tax being collected both in Lansing and across the state, local tax revenues and anticipated state revenue sharing payments have plummeted.

Frayer said the city has only collected about $24 million of $37 million in anticipated income tax this year. It's unclear how much of that cash will eventually arrive in city coffers before the fiscal year ends June 30.

As for next year, early estimates suggest Lansing could lose out on $6 million to $10 million in income taxes and another $3 million to $4 million in state revenue sharing payments over the next fiscal year.

See Budget, Page 7

Few options to filling state budget hole

Higher gas tax, anyone?

POLITICS



KYLE MELINN

The state's top bean counters are getting together in a couple of weeks to figure out how big of a hole Michigan's government is in

Early indications are it's deep. And that's likely going to mean a lot of midyear budget cuts.

The numbers coming out of the May 15 revenue setting meeting will lean heavily on projections from the University of Michigan, which predicted a $2.6 billion drop in state revenue.

That's a lot of money. Michigan's entire state budget is $59 billion. Only $10 billion of it is discretionary General Fund spending. The rest is either federal money or specific fees and taxes that go to specific things.

To make matters worse, we've only got five months remaining in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, so a lot of money has already been spent.

"The legislature and executive office will have a slightly greater challenge in addressing the state's budget problems because Michigan came into this crisis under-prepared," said Jordan Newton, of the Citizens Research Council of Michigan during a CRC/MIRS webinar.

Michigan has become too reliant on federal money for the last 20 years, which ties state government's hands on how it spends its money, Newton said. A study by Moody's Analytics found Michigan didn't have enough holed away to make through a moderate recession.

What we're going to experience is going to be much more than that.

Higher taxes — at this point — likely isn't an option for the Republican Legislature. That doesn't leave a lot of options, but here's Michigan's best two:

— The rainy-day Budget Stabilization Fund has $1 billion in it. Legislators aren't going to drain the whole thing, but they'll likely use a good chunk of it.

—Federal money. During the Great Recession, Michigan used federal stimulus dollars to make the cuts in state government less awful than they would have been otherwise.

According to the House Fiscal Agency, at least $5.6 billion is coming to Michigan, but a lot of that money won't flow through state government, such as the direct payments to individuals, the expanded unemployment benefits and Small Business loans.

Michigan and other states will either need a more federal money or the strings attached to whatever federal money we do get will need to be loosened.

Maybe Michigan being a swing state that President Donald Trump probably needs to have to win the White House will come in handy.

Otherwise, the options don't look great. The free market-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy came out with its options last week. They were pretty ugly. Take a look at the big dollar savers:

— Eliminating non-constitutional revenue sharing for cities, villages, townships and counties: $490 million. With Lansing and other cities gasping for air, this isn't going to go over well.

—Setting state university money at $5,000 per in-state pupil: $412.6 million. Say hello to higher tuition costs.

— Suspend the final three months of funding to the state's Great Start Readiness program since most, if not all, of the local programming is getting shut down for the rest of the academic year: $68 million. The only problem is next year's budget doesn't look great either so this could be on the shelf a while.

— End any General Fund money to the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. Instead, let all licensed industry pay the fees that cover the cost to regulate them: $124 million. This would entail the Republican legislator to suck up a vote on higher fees. Good luck.

—Ending economic incentives like the Michigan Business Development and Community Revitalization programs: $95.8 million. The Mackinac Center has always had a problem with these programs, which allow Michigan to compete with jobs — which one could argue we're going to need a lot of soon.

— Permanently reducing state staff levels. This comes off Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's 10-day layoff of non-essential staff. The Mackinac Center claims if more programming can be cut, $18.3 million could be saved.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey has ordered the budget subcommittee chairman to draft a proposal that could slice 10%, 20% or 30% from their respective budgets.

"There are no line items, no projects, no budgets, and no persons that's immune from this analysis," Shirkey said.

For a state that's been living on a shoestring budget during good economic times, these options aren't going to look great.

With the price of gas at $1.50 a gallon, maybe Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's 45-cent-a-gallon hike on gas doesn't look so bad after all.

(Kyle Melinn, of the Capitol newsletter MIRS, is at melinnky@gmail.com.)

Budget

from page 6

Frayer said renegotiated health care plans, new city insurance packages and a larger return on equity from the Board of Water & Light will help to offset some of those expected shortfalls, but she cautioned that budget slashing will still be needed to plug a $1 million to $5 million shortfall next fiscal year.

A budget amendment passed last month leaves about $6.8 million in the city's reserve funds — about $10 million below guidelines that recommend that the fund's balance always remain at about $16.89 million, or about 12% of the city's $140.7 million in expenditures budgeted for this fiscal year.

Schor's latest budget proposal had planned to bring that figure to about $7.3 million next year. But given the impact of the virus, that rainy day fund will likely see some reductions. Plans to build up those reserves will no longer be feasible without trimming millions in expenses.

Even with two months of revenue loss and a large-scale return to normalcy by May 15, Frayer projects the city would lose out on about $9.6 million in income taxes and state revenues. If the lockdown continues until June, that figure could climb as high as $13.8 million.

As a result, the gap between revenues and expenses would only continue to widen, requiring expenses — possibly including payroll — to be trimmed to help balance the city budget.

"We don't know the full impact of this until we're back, until we're operational, until we can go back and measure the true impact," Frayer explained to the Council, noting residents may still be hesitant to frequent restaurants, bars and other businesses even after the lockdown ends.

"Nothing is off the table," she said. "We don't have all the solutions and everything worked out."

The city is still negotiating about $2.5 million in federal fines triggered, in part, by the failure of the city to file paperwork required by the federal government under the Affordable Care Act. That paperwork has since been filed and could help cushion the expected economic blow.

A $1.25 million settlement paid by the city over a lawsuit involving sewage-flooded homes will also be returned to the general fund. Instead the settlement will be paid from the city's sewer fund. But officials are recognizing the reality that Lansing's budgetary belt will still need tightening.

"I think it's a worst-case scenario and could mean we need to trim some things, and that could include possible layoffs," said Council President Peter Spadafore. "That's nobody's first choice. We never want to take that route, but when the money isn't here, you can't really pay folks."

The city is also likely to face further revenue shortfalls from an overall reduction in services — and their fees — as a result of the widespread closures. Parking tickets, for example, are no longer issued. The building department isn't issuing permits. Other fines are not being paid.

The city is also paying out an unnamed amount of additional costs, largely for personal protective equipment for first responders, officials said. And while those costs may be reimbursed through federal assistance, they could also factor into the city's budget dilemmas.

Emergency Management Chief William Engelter said every city department is actively tracking coronavirus-related expenses — like overtime for essential staff and technological upgrades to handle more remote work — but those figures haven't been aggregated for an estimated total.

"Of course, we'll focus on services that are vital to maintaining the public health and safety of the city, but this may mean we delay certain construction projects or maybe some capital investments," Spadafore added. "Unfortunately, that's the reality of tough economic times."

Small and mid-sized cities like Lansing are also excluded from a portion of the federal CARES Act that provides direct relief to struggling municipalities, reports the Lansing State Journal. Therefore, Lansing can't split the $150 billion pot for cities with more than 500,000 residents.

Bills have been introduced to send additional funding to smaller cities but have yet to materialize into legislation. Schor, with help from U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, has been pushing for direct appropriations during an upcoming round of federal appropriations for local municipalities.

"We are on the frontlines and have tremendous costs due to COVID-19, and our budgets, which fund all of our frontline efforts, are greatly affected by the closure of the economy," Schor added.

As for layoffs? Schor said the city hasn't yet crossed that bridge, but will evaluate the possibility.

"We can't print dollars in the city of Lansing like the federal government does," Spadafore added. "We're hoping there are some additional rounds of federal funding to supplant city revenues. We're all taking this very seriously, and clearly we have some problems to deal with."

— **KYLE KAMINSKI**

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EYE CANDY OF THE WEEK



3515 Coolidge Road East Lansing

There is a "lost city" element to this two-story Collegiate Gothic-style building, the 14,400 square foot building, which looks as if it would be equally at home in the West Circle area of Michigan State University's campus. In reality, however, the building was erected in 2005 by Biersbach Development LLC and is home to medical offices. The area of East Lansing where this building is located in Clinton County has seen significant development over the past 15 years. To the east, between Coolidge and Coleman roads, is Mayberry Homes' original planned community. To the north on Coolidge Road is the MSUFCU headquarters and main branch. The area immediately surrounding the 3515 building includes an ever-growing number of sprawling one-story commercial developments. All of which makes the presence of the 3515 building seem even more unique. The Tudor influences including the long windows and the brick façade, as well as it being two stories, give the building a timeless feeling as if it has always been there. Furthermore, it is a welcome departure from the (lack of) style, totally utilitarian building that most medical offices seem to inhabit.

— **CARRIE SAMPSON**

"Eye Candy of the Week" is our look at some of the nicer properties in Lansing. It rotates each with Eyesore of the Week. If you have a suggestion, please e-mail eye@lansingcitypulse.com or call Berl Schwartz at 999-5061.

‘We can adapt’

MSU researchers ‘MacGyver’ new COVID-19 test but wait for green light

The COVID-19 pandemic has kicked up a flurry of creative thinking among scientists, but regulations barring academic researchers from clinical work are proving harder to shake loose, even in a pandemic that calls for all hands on deck.

In early May, an MSU research team adapted equipment they were using to study Parkinson’s disease to “MacGyver” a COVID-19 test that’s 50 times more sensitive than most of the tests now in use.

The test can pick up very small viral loads, avoiding the dreaded false negative that allows infected people to go on their merry way, spreading the virus.

The MSU researchers are already working on a followup test that would use saliva, not nasal-pharyngeal swabs, and could become widespread in homes and offices, enabling the country to reopen with greater confidence that the virus is not spreading while hidden from view.

But research labs like MSU’s Translational Neuroscience Department, where the new test was developed, don’t have the accreditation to do clinical work, and need an emergency go-ahead to do clinical testing.

Last week, MSU neuroscience Professor Jack Lipton made the case for academic labs to join the clinical fight against COVID-19 in an op-ed piece in The Wall Street Journal and has made the rounds of news outlets, including Fox News. Lipton is the chairman of the Department of Translational Neuroscience, a part of MSU’s College of Human Medicine, where researchers spend much of their time looking into the genetic changes wrought by Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases.

Lipton told Fox News last week that if even one-tenth of the nation’s academic labs joined the clinical effort, “we could test an additional 500,000 to 1 million samples a day.”

Tuesday, Lipton told City Pulse he’s still hoping for action from the state.

“We do not have anything definitive yet,” Lipton said. “But the Michigan congressional delegation is working with us to have CMS [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services] consider broadening the allowances for labs to let us test. Nothing official though.”



Courtesy photo

MSU researcher Joseph Patterson helped develop a test for the COVID-19 virus that is 50 times more sensitive than the conventional tests in wide use.

Work on the new COVID-19 test began at MSU when a light bulb went off in the brain of Joseph Patterson, a research assistant professor.

Patterson was intrigued to learn that a Chinese research team had adapted a “droplet digital PCR,” a sensitive device capable of probing genetic material in a variety of tests, to develop a more accurate test for the COVID-19 virus.

“We went, ‘Wait, this is all that it is? We do that now,’” Patterson said. Patterson was already using the machine in his research on Parkinson’s disease, to measure how genes change in the early stages of the disease, before nerve damage is evident.

“Being able to isolate RNA from human samples was no stretch for us,” Patterson said. “We were basically taking everything we already know how to do, and using it to measure this virus’s RNA as opposed to the RNA we usually measure.”

The droplet digital PCR looks like a compact humidifier, and with good reason. Both devices dole out delicate droplets. According to the manufacturer’s web site, a “singulator” carefully “sips” 20,000 tiny drops from a sample and sends them in single file past an optical detector. Each droplet is designated positive or negative for the presence of the target RNA — in this case, the genetic signature of COVID-19.

The sensitivity of the Droplet Digital PCR makes it extra valuable when tracking a virus that doesn’t always cause symptoms. Standard tests give a false negative from 20 to 30% of the time, according to an MSU study.

“This technique would be good for monitoring the progression of the disease,” Patterson said. “You can actually see when the viral load is completely gone, rather than when it becomes undetectable by the less sensitive equipment.”

Patterson is always scanning for new information. Only a few days ago, new studies from Rutgers and Yale suggested a technique to test for COVID-19 from saliva with more accuracy than the traditional nasal-pharyngeal swab.

Saliva tests have the exciting potential to finally get the nation on top of the massive task of tracking the COVID-19 virus, making testing easy and widespread at home and work.

“We’re already looking at a screening process using saliva,” Patterson said.

MSU’s translational neuroscience lab isn’t the only academic lab itching to join the fight against COVID-19.

“There’s a lot of labs right now that are shut down and everything’s gone cold right now,” Patterson said.

Lipton is working overtime on that logjam, making his case in national media and lobbying lawmakers.

“We do this kind of test, this PCR test, all the time,” Lipton told Fox News last week. “And there are thousands of labs across the country that could do the same thing with high rigor, reproducibility and confidence.”

Patterson hopes the pent-up energy and expertise of academic labs around the nation can be freed to do clinical tests, but he’s not sure it will happen soon. In addition to state legislation, the federal FDA would have to waive the requirement that a lab has to be accredited by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments, or CLIA, to do diagnostic clinical testing.

“Even if you have legislators behind you, you still need the executive branch to back it up, and it’s hard to tell right now what the executive branch is going to do, which is the kindest thing I can possibly say,” Patterson said. “We’ve been very good at McGyver-ing things in the past with minimal supplies. We can adapt. We can improvise. We worked out a COVID test in a week. I’m not saying we shouldn’t be regulated. I’m just saying, deputize us to do work that there aren’t enough hands for right now.”

— LAWRENCE COSENTINO

To cover or not to cover

Michiganders started the week with a confusing pair of state directives on face coverings.

On Friday, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued an “order” that lacked any penalty for violations. On Sunday, she issued a second order that makes it a misdemeanor for not wearing a mask in certain situations. Here are more details on what is required and what is only encouraged:

— Required: Per Sunday’s order, all those who enter restaurants, pharmacies, and convenience and grocery stores must wear face coverings as long as they can “medically tolerate” doing so. Employers must provide masks to employees and require checkout staff to wear them. Failure to do so is a misdemeanor. Local law enforcement agencies are advised to take into consideration whether a business had tried and failed to obtain masks.

— Encouraged: The public should wear masks when going into all other indoor public places. Technically, the order requires the masks, but it also exempts violations from any penalties. Businesses may still refuse service to customers without masks, state officials emphasized.

What constitutes a mask?

Ingham Co. Health Officer Linda Vail said face coverings worn by the general public shouldn’t be medical-grade masks, which remain in short supply for health professionals. They can be simple scarves, bandanas or other cloth material — either purchased or homemade — as long as they cover both the nose and the mouth. Vail said coverings should be washed daily to avoid contamination.

COVID on Main Street

Small towns hunker down and hope for better days

Deserted urban streets and plazas, once crowded with traffic, have become the visual signature of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

The effect of the crisis on smaller towns is harder to sum up in one picture.

Towns and villages around Lansing have far fewer cases of COVID-19 than the urban hot spots, but people are still frightened and hurting. The statewide economic shutdown is ravaging the small businesses and farms that are the lifeblood of rural and small-town life. People are poised between fear and hope, unsure whether the virus will pass them by or make its inexorable way to their neck of the woods.

Many people in places like Williamston, Potterville and Charlotte understand the need for the shutdown and are taking precautions against the spread of the virus seriously, in spite of the light toll in their areas. Others are carrying on as usual, acting as if the pandemic is a purely urban curse.

Small towns have as much to lose in this crisis as cities. The loss of social life as schools are closed, athletic events are canceled and local hangouts are shuttered is no less heart-breaking in a close-knit, small community than in a crowded metropolis.

After the recession of 2008, smaller towns, already reeling from a collapse of small manufacturing and other economic fallout, took longer to recover than bigger cities. The growing information economy favored larger cities, accelerating the exodus of educated young people to urban areas.

But the traffic has been two-way. Attracted by small-town life, more and more city dwellers in Lansing and East Lansing have moved to places like Ovid and Bath. Many towns enjoyed partial comebacks, renovating stores and theaters on their Main Streets and welcoming a more diversified array of businesses. Such success stories are the fruit of patient, years-long effort, spearheaded by proud residents and plucky civic organizations like CharlotteRising, Williamston's Historic District and Portland's Downtown Development Authority. The current crisis threatens to roll back much of that fragile progress.

The world looked at recent demonstrations at Lansing's Capitol and saw angry protesters brandishing automatic weapons, Confederate flags and Trump signs.

The dominant images from the protests fed into the narrative that people from small towns and rural areas are overwhelmingly frustrated with quarantine, ready to lock and load and heedless of the risks of re-opening the economy. The following first-person reports from three neighboring towns — Charlotte, Webberville and Ovid — paint a more nuanced picture.



Skyler Ashley/City Pulse

By SKYLER ASHLEY

CHARLOTTE — Since leaving my hometown to pursue college in the far-off land of Lansing, I'm always learning about the little improvements being made to my old stomping grounds. The organization CharlotteRising, formed in 2016, has helped the small town capitalize on a lot of economic and community-building opportunities.

Windwalker Underground Gallery, owned by my grandfather Richard Turbin, was once totally dilapidated. Now it's a groovy little music venue and art center. Eaton Theatre, which also used to be in similarly shoddy condition, has been completely renovated with new digital projectors and screens. Though, nowadays, the theater can only sell popcorn curbside in lieu of shelter-in-place rules.

Charlotte seems to be a better to place to live than when I left it. But I hope the coronavirus doesn't kill the momentum.

The surreal doomsday vibe seems to carry over no matter how big of a city you're in. Walking down Cochran Avenue on a warm day and seeing the empty businesses adorned with vast rows of burned-out neon signs has a surreal quality. It's like walking through the set of a film production after the actors have all gone home. Many businesses have posted pictures of Charlotte High School seniors to their windows; with hopeful messages declaring that, one day, things will return to normal. People can "adopt" a senior and send them gifts to help cope with the disappointing end to their high school life.

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Skyler Ashley/City Pulse

Photos of graduating Charlotte High School seniors hang in the window of Eaton Theatre.



Skyler Ashley/City Pulse

One of several optimistic signs posted on the windows of the Crosswalk Teen Center in Charlotte.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF LANSING

LEGAL NOTICE
SPECIAL USE PERMIT

Notice is hereby given that the Charter Township of Lansing Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Offices located at 3209 West Michigan Avenue, Lansing, Michigan, for the purpose of recommending approval or denial of the following request:

Special Use Permit SP-20-02 to allow telecommunications hut or shelter to house fiber optic equipment which will provide fiber optic internet to business & residential customers. To be located on vacant parcel to rear of 3724 W. St. Joseph. Property is zoned "D" Administrative.

Tentative text and other information may be examined at the Office of the Clerk, 3209 West Michigan Avenue, Lansing, Michigan.

In the event that the Governor of Michigan extends the order to allow for virtual meetings past May 12, 2020, this meeting may be conducted virtually via ZOOM. Information will be posted on the Township's website at www.LansingTownship.org.

Susan L. Aten, Clerk
Charter Township of Lansing

CP#20-106

CITY OF LANSING
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Public Hearing will be held on Monday, Monday, May 11, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. during the regularly schedule City Council Meeting, via ZOOM Conferencing, Meeting ID 978 4778 3218 for the purpose of considering:

An Ordinance of the City of Lansing, Michigan, to: amend Section 260.05 of the Lansing Codified Ordinances to allow for the Lansing Housing Commission to own and transact real property in its own name, and remove certain approvals by the City as to selection and compensation of officers and employees of the Commission; and amend Section 260.07 of the Lansing Codified Ordinances to clarify insurance requirements, and remove certain approvals by the City related to the Commission's annual audit.

With Executive Order 2020-4, Governor Whitmer declared a statewide State of Emergency due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). 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 public hearing will be conducted via audio/video conference.

The public hearing will be electronically in accordance with the Open Meetings Act in an effort to protect the health and safety of the public. Michigan Executive Order 2020-15 provides temporary authorization of remote participation in public meetings and hearings. Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may do so by logging into or calling into the meetings using the website https://zoom.us/j/97847783218 (Note: this option requires downloading Zoom software. If you have not already installed the software, this may take a few minutes) or by calling 646-876-9923 and entering Meeting ID: 978 4778 3218.

Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation to fully participate in these meetings should contact the City Council Office at 517-483-4177 (TDD (517) 483-4479) 24 hour notice may be needed for certain accommodations. An attempt will be made to grant all reasonable accommodation requests.

For more information, please call 517-483-4177. If you are interested in this matter, please attend the public hearing or send a representative. Written comments will be accepted between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on City business days if received before 5 p.m., on the day of the Public Hearing at the City Clerk's Office, Ninth Floor, City Hall, 124 West Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48933 or email city.clerk@lansingmi.gov.

Chris Swope, Lansing City Clerk, MMC/CMMC
www.lansingmi.gov/Clerk
www.facebook.com/LansingClerkSwope

CP#20-108

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It's haunting knowing the majority of businesses in Charlotte are small, locally owned operations — the exact type hit hardest by the coronavirus. These places don't have corporate backing; they're at the mercy of donations, grants and federal loan applications.

Windwalker's open mic nights give many budding Charlotte musicians and poets a much-needed platform. My little brother used to perform with his bass guitar and a small amplifier, playing distorted bass lines from old Metallica songs. When there's nowhere else to go — because you're just a teenage kid who can't afford a car — places like Windwalker are a big deal. Clint Dickerson, who teaches music at the venue, hopes the increasingly long hiatus won't leave the venue in the dust.

"We're losing out. We were the community's place to hang out and play music. Now, we've had to cancel six different shows," Dickerson said. "Everybody understands that the virus is going on, so nobody will take it personally. But when you take this long of a break, people might forget about you."

Luckily, Dickerson said the people of Charlotte have been very kind to one another through the shared struggle.

"You see a lot of people really come together. You have people putting out daily videos; posting weekly menus for the restaurants in town that are still doing takeout," Dickerson said.

Dickerson mentioned the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce's Cash Mob program, a weekly Facebook event that highlights one local business per day and asks people to purchase its gift certificates.

Charlotte Rising, which often partners with the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, is working overtime to help offset the coronavirus' impact.

"I've helped our businesses downtown fill out 30 to 40 grant applications to different programs. Every single week, we call businesses to see how they're doing. It falls on the shoulders of Charlotte Rising to make sure our small businesses are supported," Lisa Barna, executive director of Charlotte Rising, said.

I wondered how the local media in Charlotte were adapting. The coronavirus forces journalists of all types to dig deeper for stories and ask awkward questions about tough situations. The County Journal, which covers stories not just in Charlotte but surroundings towns such as Potterville and Eaton Rapids, is the local weekly.

"We're not printing out any physical copies at this time," Production manager Travis Silva said. "The ad revenue has gone down so much it wasn't feasible to continue."

The County Journal's coverage — much like every other outlet in the world — is now coronavirus-centric. One of its latest stories is about a Charlotte therapist's experience familiarizing herself with Zoom, the video call service we've all been forced to learn over the past month.

Down the street from Windwalker on the other side of Cochran Avenue is a community center for teenagers called Crosswalk Teen Center. I played a small show at Crosswalk when it was

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Dawn Parker/City Pulse

Village Food Pride has served Ovid since at least the 1970s. Sneeze guards at the registers is one way the store has adapted to COVID-19.

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brand new in 2014. I had just graduated high school. I played guitar in a punk band, which at the time was called the Quaranteenz. I swear I'm not lying.

Crosswalk is a place I wish existed when I was 14 or 15. A hangout where I could avoid my parents, but still be in a safe environment, would've kept me out of a lot of trouble back in the day. Staring through its windows and gazing at its shadowy lobby made me wonder what the kids who might consider it a second home are doing now.

"We're trying to stay connected to their lives and make sure they're all OK. But all of that is hard. We're worried about our kids and the impact this has on them," Crosswalk Teen Center executive director Rick Todd said. "I'm glad we're in a world where we have Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, but it's not the same as actually being with them."



Kyle Kaminski/City Pulse

By DAWN PARKER

OVID — When my husband and I were looking to move out of East Lansing, I'm not certain we'd ever heard of Ovid.

Nearly two years later, we're glad we made the switch from a bustling — and occasionally crazy — college town to next to the cornfield. It would take a lot to send us back.

Where is Ovid, you ask? Find St. Johns on a map, then head east until you reach Owosso. Ovid is smack in the middle of the two much larger towns, without the amenities — big box stores, movie theaters — of its larger neighbors. It's a bedroom community for people who travel as far as Lansing for work.

Ovid doesn't have the amenities of its larger neighbors. It doesn't need them.

In this pandemic time, people need a robust selection at the Redbox movie machine and a place to buy microwave popcorn, and the Village Food Pride is well stocked. The small grocery store is a welcome sight in good times, offering just about anything you might need at fairer prices than you might expect.

The store has rolled with the punches to combat COVID-19, with sneeze guards at the registers and the staff wearing masks. Many customers wear masks, while others do not.

As you might imagine, downtown Ovid has been quieter than usual during the lockdown, with no library to pick up a book and nowhere to get a haircut. It's still a great place to live, Bill Lasher says.

When Lasher moved his family to Ovid 45 years ago, the newly named Clinton County extension agent for Michigan State University was thinking of his young children who were just starting school.

"I wanted to be in a town where the kids had someone to play with," he recalled recently.

He's served as either village president or mayor since 2002. In that time, he's seen general purpose stores move out and specialty retailers come in, seen a downtown bank branch go out and a local credit union branch fill the gap out on M-21. The population has gotten younger over time, Lasher noted, going from a preponderance of widows to nearly one-third who are 18 and younger.

From what he's observed, it's all about families.

"People are looking for a safe school system where they don't have to worry about their kids getting bullied or beat up," Lasher said. "This school system meets those kinds of needs."

From what he has seen, downtown Ovid's next challenges after the pandemic are bringing back the people who got accustomed to getting what they needed via online shopping rather than at local stores, as well as making sure Ovid is still a place people want to come home to at the end of their work day.

Speaking of schools, the coronavirus pandemic that forced a premature end to the school year directly impacted the Class of 2020. While most Ovid-Elsie High School students are adjusting to online learning, the senior class is dealing with the loss of milestone traditions like prom and graduation.

Ovid resident Dana Blank is class adviser to the Class of 2020. High school staff have been working overtime to reschedule those special events, with an eye currently toward August.

Community members have been supportive of students from first grade on up, with the "lunch ladies" — appropriately masked, of course — handing out meals outside Leonard Elementary. In normal times, the Ovid elementary is also a bus stop for middle school students headed to the seventh- through 12th-grade complex.

Others have helped to try and fill the gap, none more poignantly than Racer Girl Graphics. The Elsie-based vinyl graphics and screen-printing shop, with the support of the two communities' main annual festivals, printed congratulatory yard signs featuring students' names and their senior pictures.

Last Saturday, anyone passing by the high school would have seen the signs dotting the grass the length of the building and waving in the breeze.

By KYLE KAMINSKI

WEBBERVILLE — Bob Cushing knows most of the people who walk into Webberville Party Store, probably their families too. Just about every customer is a regular customer at the only liquor store in town.

Cushing has owned the shop for almost a decade and works the counter most nights. I kept his coolers stocked for a few summers between semesters back in college. He's a laid-back guy who usually spends more time gabbing with local residents than actually selling them anything.

Lately, it's been from behind a plexiglass barrier. Webberville, might be a strong, close-knit community (with fewer than 10 COVID-19 cases as of Wednesday evening) but he knows that it's not immune to both the health and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

Like at the pharmacy next door, many residents come in wearing masks. It can be hard to avoid keeping your distance in a small town like Webberville, but the sense of caution is still apparent.

"We can be assured it has no boundaries. This is why it's so important for us to continue safe social distancing so that we can minimize our risk. Keeping our community safe is worth the extra effort for now," Cushing said, noting his regulars see a risk in shopping at larger stores.

"I've seen an increase in business primarily due to people buying what they need for a few days so they don't have to frequent as often," he explained. "Overall, my business is doing well."

Cushing was wiping down door handles, countertops and the ATM machine for the umpteenth late last week. It's a small shop, but markers on the floor are another clear reminder to keep your distance. Webberville has been cautious lately. And he wants his customers to feel safe.

"I know most people by name. I know what they do

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do for a living and where they live," Cushing, like other Webberville residents, explained to me late last week. 'I'm really lucky to be that close with a lot of my customers. It helps me be successful, and at the same time, make friends."

I recognize a lot of the customers that shop there too. I was one of 44 people to graduate from Webberville High School in 2010. I knew every one of my classmates — a lot of their parents too. And while many, myself included, have left town, it's hard to escape a sense of familiarity.

Webberville is (quite literally) a one-stoplight town. Aside from Bob's party store, the downtown area is a pharmacy, a pizza place, an ice cream shop and a Dollar General. The library and the local pub are closed. The only two diners in the village were closed long before the virus arrived.

The emptiness wasn't induced by the virus. Webberville is fairly isolated from urban areas and, like many other rural villages, depends heavily on its agriculture over its downtown commerce. I drove a tractor to school once. My English teacher convinced me to raise lambs.

And as Michigan adjusts to its new life in Coronaland, farming is still plenty essential.

"We're cleaning and wiping everything down around here, but other than that, not much has changed. As far as business goes, things are pretty normal around here," said Brian Isahart, office manager at Webberville Feed & Grain. "But then again, it's always pretty quiet here."

Several signs have popped up across neighborhood lawns. And while rural communities tend to garner some of the more raucous conservative stereotypes, these are simple: "Spread Hope." Isahart said most local residents appear to be taking COVID-19 precautions seriously in town.

"I'm worried that it's going to be a long time until we're in the clear on this," Isahart added. "That's the bad thing: There's no real end in sight. It's this unknown and this uncertainty. Maybe if people didn't go out during those first few weeks, we wouldn't have needed this lockdown."

Stephany Bohlmann was among my closest friends in Webberville.





Photos by Kyle Kaminski/City Pulse

Owner Bob Cushing checks out a customer at Webberville Party Store from behind a sheet of plexiglass.

Like most of my classmates, I've known her since kindergarten. We played on the same football team. I drank my first beer while camping in her backyard. Now she teaches science at the newly virtualized high school.

"Students and teachers are missing out on a lot," she said. "It's super sad, because I'm also missing out on so many lessons that I usually get to learn from my students on a daily basis."

Especially at small schools, students have lost a sense of connectivity — both educationally and emotionally — during the statewide shutdown. But Bohlmann still offers her students a chance to meet twice weekly on Zoom as the school gets by with a variety of online learning formats.

Last week, she logged in just to chit-chat and play a game of Pictionary with a student.

"We definitely have that small town feel here," she said. "Everyone is just looking out for everyone. I really couldn't be more proud to be in this community still. I love knowing everyone in town. There can be positives and negatives to that, but I love the close connections in town."

Amid the uncertainty, however, the community is also coming closer together. Kim Marcotullio, who has worked at the local pharmacy for 40 years, knows that a neighborly sense of familial community is a staple in the village without the pandemic. And lately, it's been in overdrive.

A few customers have dropped off boxes of gloves or homemade masks with simple instructions for the pharmacy: Give them out to whoever needs them. If someone needs food delivered to their home, Marcotullio said it probably wouldn't take her long to find a volunteer.

"People are just being a lot more thoughtful," she added. "What I like about a small town is that if someone is standing there and hears that somebody needs something, they'll volunteer to help. They'll run home and grab their box of gloves. They'll find them a homemade mask."

"Am I still worried? Of course I'm worried. I think I would be naive not to be worried about this."

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ARTS & CULTURE

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BLOWING ON THE EMBERS

JAMM marks Jazz Day with on line watch party

By LAWRENCE COSENTINO

The big lockdown of 2020 has temporarily tamped down the fire of live jazz in Lansing to embers of memory. To behold the flame once more, and offer hope for its return, the Jazz Alliance of Mid-Michigan is taking its annual International Jazz Day bash online.

Friday, May 1, from 7 to 10 p.m., JAMM will stream an all-star jazz concert from Nov. 19 of last year for the first time, with every recipient who has received the group's lifetime award, from bassists Rodney Whitaker and Gene Rebeck to drummers Randy Gelispie and Jeff Shoup, organist Jim Alfredson, pianists Ron Newman and Jeff Kressler and vocalists Betty Joplin, Betty Baxter and Sunny Wilkinson.

Jazz Alliance of Mid-Michigan Inernational Jazz Day streaming watch party
7-10 p.m. Friday, May 1
facebook.com/jazzjamm

The watch party will help JAMM continue to distribute relief grants to area musicians who are hurting during an unprecedented dry spell.

Most of all, JAMM President Lois Mummaw hopes the party will "remind people what it's like to be at a live jazz event and give hope that musicians will be able to play for live crowds again."

Lansing's thriving jazz scene, from Jazz Tuesdays at Moriarty's to eruptions of international greatness from MSU's stellar jazz department, supplied onstage miracles with the regularity of a public utility, building a close-knit, loving community of fans.

"I took it all so much for granted," Mummaw said. "Now the thought of going out and sitting in a crowded room, or standing in a crowd at an outdoor festival, seems like a hundred years ago."

In the quarantine era, Lansing area fans are getting their live jazz fix by from on line solo gigs from top musicians like organist Alfredson and guitarist Elden Kelly, but solo gigs only capture a part of the spontaneous give and take of jazz.



Drummer Jeff Shoup, vocalist Sunny Wilkinson and organist Jim Alfredson perform at an all-star concert at Lansing's Urban Beat last Nov. 11. The concert will be streamed at a watch party Friday to celebrate International Jazz Day.

The East Lansing Summer Solstice Jazz Festival has been canceled this year and the fate of Jazz Fest and Blues Fest is up in the air.

JAMM's annual Jazz Day bash began in 2013, a year after 2011, UNESCO named April 30 International Jazz Day.

For the last few years, the party was hosted by Gregory's Soul Food at 2510 N. Martin Luther King Blvd. in north Lansing.

Gregory's was again slated to host a Jazz Day Party April 24, a happy hour dance party with music from the JAMM Scholarship band, but the quarantine shut it down. JAMM is paying the band anyway, along with Gregory's $250 rental fee.

This year, Mummaw hoped to connect with Gregory's by organizing a pickup event to go with Friday's live streaming event, but the logistics didn't work out. Suffice it to say that if anyone wants the whole catfish and wings Jazz Day experience, Gregory's is still open every day for takeout from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The major artists featured in Friday's streaming concert assembled to pay tribute to the host of WLNZ's "The Vinyl Side of Midnight," Mike Stratton. The evening was not only a musical showcase nonpareil, capped by a moving and soulful set by Betty Joplin, but also a celebration of jazz love the likes of which the organization had never seen before.

The stream also contains the dubious spectacle of this writer, making his only public speaking appearance of this millennium or any other.

The virtual tip jar will help JAMM continue to distribute $200 Musician Relief Grants to local musicians who have been sidelined by quarantine. The group has already distributed 19 grants and plans to distribute 12 more, thanks to recent donations.

"The jazz community in Michigan is so generous. It's amazing," Mummaw said. "I know $200 doesn't seem like much, but musicians are hurting so much now and everything helps."

The grants are named after Joy and Robert Brown, two stalwart fans who supported JAMM for years, well into their 90s, and could be seen at nearly every jazz event in the area for many years. Robert Brown died last October and Joy Brown died in March of this year.

"If JAMM wasn't around, they'd be the ones writing the relief checks," Mummaw said. "That's how supportive they were. They were always interested in the younger musicians."

JAMM is also putting out the word for local jazz musicians to submit their live streaming gigs to the organizations's on line calendar. Mummaw invited musicians to go the JAMM web site, jazzjamm.com, and submit their gigs to inform the group's wider membership, to help tide jazz lovers over until the moon shines on the bandstand again.

Dissecting Michigan author's reissued novel 'Quarantine'

By BILL CASTANIER

There may be shortages of PPE, toilet paper, pork, yeast and flour, but there are no shortages of plague and pandemic novels.

Some date back centuries, like Daniel Defoe's classic "A Journal of the Plague Year," written in 1722, Mary Shelley's "The Last Man," written in 1826, and "The Masque of the Red Death," penned by Edgar Allan Poe in 1842.

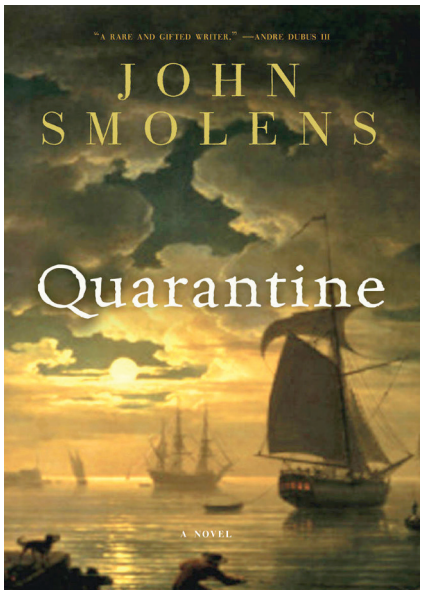
Mystery and thriller novels have also used the plague as a backdrop for murder and mayhem. "Fever Season," by Barbara Hambly, is one of my favorites. "Fever Season" follows Dr. January, a free man of color in 1830s New Orleans, as he uncovers a series of murders being covered up by a yellow fever epidemic. I'm also fond of "The Fever," where former Michiganian Megan Abbott dissects the culture of teenage girls as a mystery illness grips a community. Although more of a thriller than a mystery, 1969's "The Andromeda Strain," by Michael Crichton, is another favorite of mine.

Most recently, I discovered a book



Smolens

by Marquette writer John Smolens, set in the New England seaside city of Newburyport, Massachusetts. Smolens, a Boston College graduate, lived there for nearly 10 years doing carpentry and house painting. The book, aptly titled "Quarantine," is a deeply layered examination of class, flawed families, greed,



religious fanaticism and survival set against an outbreak of yellow fever.

"Quarantine" has been out of print for several years, but Michigan State University Press reissued the book in late 2019. Smolens said the book has roots reaching back more than 40 years ago. In those days, he restored historic homes in Newburyport, which is 38 miles northeast of Boston. When Smolens arrived at the former seaport on the Merrimack River in 1973 it was just beginning to go through a renaissance. He said the homes taught him some history as he "swung a hammer for a living."

While gutting old houses, Smolens often found items hidden in the walls. He found a diary and racing form, and on the back of boards he discovered dated signatures of carpenters. Some of the notations were more than 200 years old. "It was a living history," he said.

During his time in Newburyport, Smolens said he moved several times, and got to know the city quite well.

In 'Quarantine' he writes: "Part of me has never really left Newburyport and when I'm able to return I'm a shameless gawker." Smolens said as he was writing the book more than a decade later, he realized the founders and early residents had "a sense of belonging to that place."

Ultimately, he left for the Midwest where he got a graduate degree and began teaching at Michigan State University in 1985.

"I would go into the library and it was like a nostalgic trip for me, since MSU had quite a collection of books on the Atlantic seaports and seafaring," Smolens said.

He made frequent trips back to Newburyport, where he dived into the local archives, reading newspapers from the late 1700s.

"I would read stacks of newspapers — especially for the language of the time and the vocabulary and syntax. I found the newspaper accounts of the time to be far more literary and sophisticated than those of today," he said.

He decided the book would be about the onset of yellow fever, carried by a sailor.

"People would die horribly and quickly and no one was safe. The population was frightened and didn't know what was going to happen," he said.

He knew he wanted to include a tale about how differently the rich and the poor fared, so he decided on an old-line shipbuilding family and another family that lives off the water gathering and selling clams.

"I wanted to show how the two ends of economic spectrum are intertwined," he said.

He does it cleverly, through the eyes of Dr. Giles Wiggins, veteran of the War of Independence, who steps up to tirelessly treat the sick and dying. Wiggins is juxtaposed against 19 year-old Leander Hatch, a third-generation clam digger who has lost his entire family to the disease.

Hatch ultimately is forced to become a stable boy for Wiggins' dysfunctional family, which treats Wiggins as an outcast.

The similarities to today's pandemic are easy to mine from this extraordinary piece of historical fiction. There are greedy profiteers, business owners who want to return to normalcy, love affairs in time of disease, religious zealots, quack doctors and medicine. There's also a fittingly dramatic ending.

Smolens' next book, "A Day of Days," is a novel set in Bath and Lansing before, during and after the infamous Bath Bombing, which killed 44 people in 1927. Of the dead, 38 were children, and the incident was one of the first acts of domestic terrorism at a school. "A Day of Days" will be published this fall.

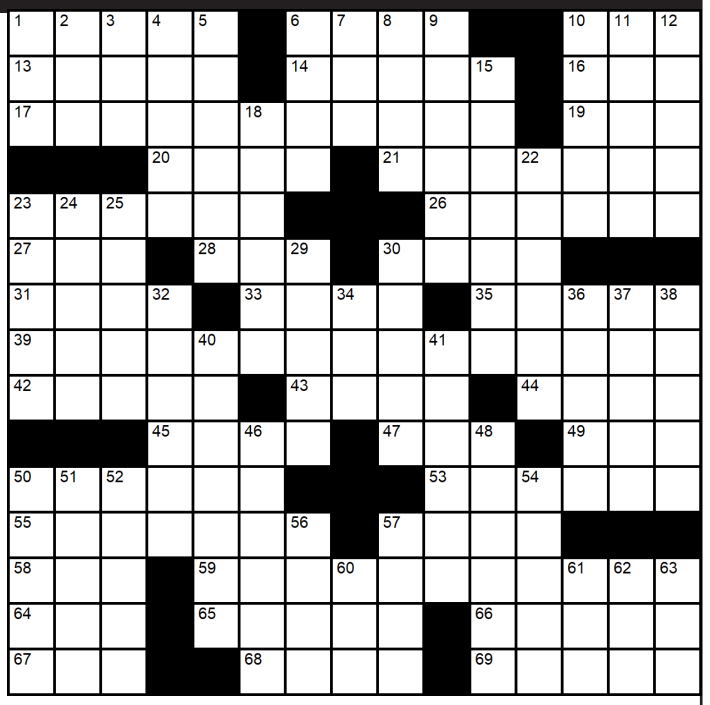


Jonesin' Crossword

By Matt Jones

"Around the World in 1000 Steps"--a world tour of the home.

By Matt Jones



Across

1 Door frame parts
6 Some laptops
10 Ring decoration
13 Fish tank buildup
14 Heart chambers
16 "Ceci n'est pas ___ pipe" (Magritte caption)
17 *Largest city in Somerset, known for Roman-built spas
19 Tajikistan, once (abbr.)
20 "Abnormally Attracted to Sin" singer Tori
21 *Brooklyn neighborhood, colloquially
23 Hulu show starring Aidy Bryant
26 Big figure in pop?
27 "Whatever"
28 Cry of pain
30 Bobcat's cousin
31 Soccer stadium shouts
33 Be changeable
35 Actress Day of Hitchcock's "The Man Who Knew Too Much"
39 *City in southern Ontario, a little over an hour from Toronto
42 Superfluous
43 Spider monkey's feature
44 Breeze
45 Greek vowels
47 Internet address ender
49 ___-Magnon
50 On the train
53 Nut and bolt spacer
55 *Country home to Legoland
57 Part of SVU
58 Word before Palmas or Cruces
59 *Portland thoroughfare often mispronounced by visitors (it's an "oo" as in "boot")
64 Land in a riviËre
65 Friendly, gender-neutral address for a child
66 Pakistani money
67 Make a wager
68 Backside
69 Writer Zola

Down

1 Boxer's move
2 "Blue Rondo ___ Turk" (Brubeck song)
3 People in charge, briefly
4 Believer in spiritual unity
5 Respectable
6 GQ and EW, e.g.
7 Hartsfield-Jackson airport code
8 Item on a seafood menu
9 Tough and stringy
10 Blasts of wind
11 Follow logically
12 Streep of "Florence Foster Jenkins"
15 Back-of-the-book material
18 2010 Eminem song featuring Lil Wayne
22 Battle of Hastings combatants
23 Light up
24 Shape of a DNA strand
25 Scarlett's Butler
29 Hopes to get
30 Sheet music line
32 Roller coaster reaction
34 "Prft-‡-Porter" actor Stephen
36 Dressing named for the type of location where it was created
37 "Go ahead, ___ you!"
38 Flavor quality
40 Place to put your fedora
41 Circus performers
46 Cleverly skillful
48 ___ d'hotel
50 Extemporaneous response
51 Fictional anchorman Howard of "Network"
52 Beginning stage
54 Play the banjo
56 African antelope with curvy horns
57 "That ain't good"
60 Inserts in some car changers
61 ___Pen (injection for allergic reactions)
62 Fish that goes into some British pies
63 Concert wear

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Answers Page 19

SUDOKU

Beginner

			2		6			
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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 19

Free Will Astrology

By Rob Brezsny

April 29-May 5, 2020

ARIES (March 21–April 19): I always hesitate to advise Aries people to slow down, be more deliberate, and pay closer attention to boring details. The Rams to whom I provide such counsel may be rebelliously annoyed with me—so much so that they move even faster, and with less attention to the details. Nevertheless, I'll risk offering you this advisory right now. Here's my reasoning, which I hope will make the prospect more appealing: If you commit to a phase in which you temporarily invoke more prudence, discretion, and watchfulness than usual, it will ultimately reward you with a specific opportunity to make rapid progress.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20): Is there an area of your life where you would like a do-over? A chance to cancel the past and erase lingering messiness and clear a path for who-knows-what new possibility? The coming weeks will be an excellent time to prepare—not to actually take the leap, but rather make yourself ready for the leap. You will have God and fate and warm fuzzy vibes on your side as you dare to dream and scheme about a fresh start. Any mistakes you committed once upon a time could become irrelevant as you fantasize practically about a future breakthrough.

GEMINI (May 21–June 20): In 1855, Gemini-born Walt Whitman published his book of poetry *Leaves of Grass*. A literary critic named Rufus Wilmot Griswold did not approve. In a review, he derided the work that would eventually be regarded as one of America's literary masterpieces. "It is impossible to imagine how any man's fancy could have conceived such a mass of stupid filth," Griswold wrote, adding that Whitman had a "degrading, beastly sensuality" driven by "the vilest imaginings." Whitman's crafty Gemini intelligence responded ingeniously to the criticism. In the next edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the author printed Griswold's full review. It helped sell even more books! I invite you to consider comparable twists and tricks.

CANCER (June 21–July 22): In your efforts to develop a vibrant community and foster a vital network of connections, you have an advantage. Your emotionally rich, nurturing spirit instills trust in people. They're drawn to you because they sense you will treat them with care and sensitivity. On the other hand, these fine attributes of yours may sometimes cause problems. Extra-needy, manipulative folks may interpret your softness as weakness. They might try to exploit your kindness to take advantage of you. So the challenge for you is to be your generous, welcoming self without allowing anyone to violate your boundaries or rip you off. Everything I just said will be helpful to meditate on in the coming weeks, as you reinvent yourself for the future time when the coronavirus crisis will have lost much of its power to disrupt our lives.

LEO (July 23–Aug. 22): Now is an excellent time to take inventory of your integrity. You're likely to get crucial insights if you evaluate the state of your ethics, your authenticity, and your compassion. Is it time to boost your commitment to a noble cause that transcends your narrow self-interest? Are there ways you've been less than fully fair and honest in your dealings with people? Is it possible you have sometimes failed to give your best? I'm not saying that you are guilty of any of those sins. But most of us are indeed guilty of them, at least now and then. And if you are, Leo, now is your special time to check in with yourself—and make any necessary adjustments and corrections.

VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22): I predict that you will have more flying dreams than usual in the coming weeks—as well as more dreams in which you're traveling around the world in the company of rebel angels and dreams in which you're leading revolutionary uprisings of oppressed people against tyrannical overlords and dreams of enjoying eight-course gourmet feasts with sexy geniuses in the year 2022. You may also, even while not asleep, well up with outlandish fantasies and exotic desires. I don't regard any of these likelihoods as problematical. In fact, I applaud them and encourage them. They're healthy for you! Bonus: All the wild action transpiring in your psyche may prompt you to generate good ideas about fun adventures you could embark on once the coronavirus crisis has ebbed.

LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 22): It's time to work your way below the surface level of things, Libra; to dig and dive into the lower reaches where the mysteries are darker and richer; to marshal your courage as you go in quest of the rest of the story. Are you willing to suspend some of your assumptions about the way things work so as to become fully alert for hidden agendas and dormant potentials? Here's a piece of advice: Your fine analytical intelligence won't be enough to guide you through this enigmatic terrain. If you hope to get face to face with the core source, you'll have to call on your deeper intuition and non-rational hunches.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21): When was the last time you researched the intricacies of what you don't like and don't desire and don't want to become? Now is a favorable time to take a thorough inventory. You'll generate good fortune for yourself by naming the following truths: 1. goals and dreams that are distractions from your primary mission; 2. attitudes and approaches that aren't suitable for your temperament and that don't contribute to your maximum health; 3. people and influences that are not in alignment with your highest good.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21): Novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky believed that the cleverest people are those who regularly call themselves fools. In other words, they feel humble amusement as they acknowledge their failings and ignorance—thereby paving the way for creative growth. They steadily renew their commitment to avoid being know-it-alls, celebrating the curiosity that such blessed innocence enables them to nurture. They give themselves permission to ask dumb questions! Now is a favorable time for you to employ these strategies.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19): What wonderful improvements and beautiful influences would you love to be basking in by May 1, 2021? What masterpieces would you love to have as key elements of your life by then? I invite you to have fun brainstorming about these possibilities in the next two weeks. If an exciting idea bubbles up into your awareness, formulate a plan that outlines the details you'll need to put in place so as to bring it to fruition when the time is right. I hereby authorize you to describe yourself with these terms: begetter; originator; maker; designer; founder; producer; framer; generator.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18): If I asked you to hug and kiss yourself regularly, would you think I was being too cute? If I encouraged you to gaze into a mirror once a day and tell yourself how beautiful and interesting you are, would you say, "That's too woo-woo for me." I hope you will respond more favorably than that, Aquarius. In fact, I will be praying for you to ascend to new heights of self-love between now and May 25. I will be rooting for you to be unabashed as you treat yourself with more compassionate tenderness than you have ever dared to before. And I do mean EVER!

PISCES (Feb. 19–March 20): In the coming weeks, I'd love to see you get excited about refining and upgrading the ways you communicate. I don't mean to imply that you're a poor communicator now; it's just that you're in a phase when you're especially empowered to enhance the clarity and candor with which you express yourself. You'll have an uncanny knack for knowing the right thing to say at the right moment. You'll generate blessings for yourself as you fine-tune your listening skills. Much of this may have to happen online and over the phone, of course. But you can still accomplish a lot!

Go to **RealAstrology.com** to check out Rob Brezsny's **EXPANDED WEEKLY AUDIO HOROSCOPES** and **DAILY TEXT MESSAGE HOROSCOPES**. The audio horoscopes are also available by phone at 1-877-873-4888 or 1-900-950-7700.

TURN IT DOWN!

LOCALS PICK LOCALS VOL. V

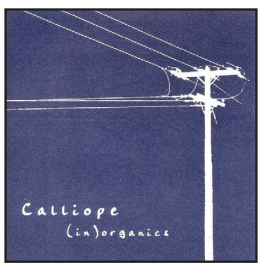
BY RICH TUPICA

THE FIFTH INSTALLMENT OF LANSING-MADE TUNES, PICKED BY LANSING-BASED ARTISTS

This week's Turn it Down! spans decades and genres, but all have deep roots in Mid-Michigan. From obscure '60s singles to remarkable power-pop and space-rock cut back in the '90s, this playlist is sure to ease the social-distancing blues. All of these tunes are on YouTube, so feel free to listen along.

Tommy Plural (vocalist, guitarist, The Plurals, GTG Records co-founder)

Pick: Calliope "Did You Get What You Came For" — 1999



I've toured around the country many times and I can happily report that Lansing sincerely has a vibrant, creative scene that rivals that of much larger cities. I'm a very vocal advocate of the music created here over the years, but if asked to highlight a specific artist I've got to go with the great space-rock band Calliope. Calliope released five albums between 1995 and 2004 with Thick Records, and the band continues to periodically issue outstanding singles. Their third album, 1999's "(in) organics," was the first record they self-recorded at a house on Lansing's east side — and it's one of the great indie-pop records of the '90s. Check out opener "Did You Get What You Came For" for a taste of their unique, psychedelic flavor.

John Olson aka Inzane Johnny (musician, Wolf Eyes, "Inzane Michigan" co-host)

Pick: Coffee House Blues "Getting Over You / Goodbye Baby" — 1968



Here's a beyond charming lone single released on Lansing's longest running home-run hit factory, Bob Baldori's Spirit Records. There are lots of gems on Spirit, but here's a soulful earworm from an obscure unit that is really sticks in the cabbage, thanks to its common lonesome tale of moving on. Bonus: Free LCC associate's degree of your choice to anyone who solves the loner-folk mystery behind Sprit Records' 1971 "McAllen" LP.

Rich Tupica (Turn it Down! writer, "Inzane Michigan" co-host)

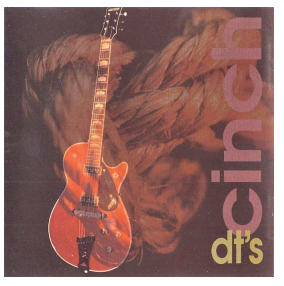
Pick: The Ferraris "Lovin' Feelin" — 1966



In the mid-'60s, while The Ones and The Woolies saw the most national success out of the Lansing-based bands, other teenage outfits such as The Plagues, Tonto & the Renegades and The Beaux Jens were also packing local teen clubs. One of the most overlooked bands from that scene is The Ferraris. Formed by teenage twin brothers Hector and Victor Juarez, the band gigged every weekend at packed teen dances. In 1967, The Ferraris even spent a week performing in a musical clinic alongside Stevie Wonder, who was attending Lansing's Michigan School for the Blind. Amazingly, Wonder fronted an impromptu jam session in the Juarez family's living room. This rare track, "Lovin' Feelin'," was recorded in March 1966 at long defunct Don Lee Studios in Lansing, but was never properly released (only as an acetate disc). The brothers disbanded after Vietnam called in 1970, but continued playing music together for decades.

Joel Kuiper (drummer, The Stick Arounds, Scary Women, The Pantones)

Pick: The Front and The dt's (1987-1996)



In the summer of 1988, I went to a house party at the corner of Beech & Gunson in East Lansing and saw a band called The Front, which featured three of my Eastern High School classmates, Scott Owens (guitar/vocals), Blair Darling (bass) and Ron Wellman (drums) along with Tom Taylor (vocals/guitar). I was mesmerized. They were the first local band I knew that wrote its own music, releasing a six-song cassette that opened with "One For You, Two For Me," which remains one of my all-time favorite local songs. Over the next few years, another Eastern Quaker, Randy Farlin, took over on drums and the band changed its name to The dt's. They would go on to enjoy local and regional success, releasing two fine records, "Cinch" (1992) and "Widow Of An All American" (1996). Owens, who left to join fellow Lansing stalwarts The Hannibals before forming 19 Wheels, was replaced by another Eastern grad Marc Nischan. As a young musician, I idolized these bands. The influence they had on me still exists today. Currently, you can hear many of them in a new outfit called Royal Scene, which just released its second EP.

Skyler Ashley (Arts and culture editor, City Pulse)

Pick: Blight "Detroit: The Dream is Dead," (2006)

Steve Miller is responsible for the some of the best punk rock to come out Lansing. If the words "punk" and "Lansing" weren't already dead giveaways, no, I'm not referring to the "Fly Like an Eagle" singer. This Miller performed with several punk bands in the early-'80s, with The Fix becoming the most renowned. Blight is a lesser-known follow up project that features Miller on guitar, Fix bassist Mike Achtenberg, Tesco Vee of the Meatmen on vocals and drummer Pat Clarke.



Blight isn't the meathead hardcore of The Fix. Miller and crew instead created disgusting noise rock in the same vein of Flipper or No Trend. This time around, Miller handles guitar duties. His tone is an unsettling, razor-thin blur of feedback and dissonance. Vee's abrasive vocals sound like he's on the verge of vomiting at any moment. The rhythm section is tight. Achtenberg's bass is filtered through a chorus pedal, which creates a nauseating effect. This release catalogs the band's brief history. If you're a fan of the weirder side of punk, it's worth checking out.

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FOOD & DRINK

DINING OUT IN GREATER LANSING

Homey small-town café eagerly awaits its reopening

By DAWN PARKER

The way Bonnie Ott figured it, every town, no matter how small, needs a place to get a coffee and hang out with friends.

That includes the tiny Clinton County hamlet of Elsie, home to just shy of 1,000 people and one noteworthy landmark, a large black-and-white cow.

Perx and Pastries
Offering takeout starting May 1
116 N. Ovid St., Elsie
facebook.com/PerxandPastries

For many years, Ott was a business teacher at Ovid-Elsie High School. She realized a long-time dream in January 2017 when she opened Perx and Pastries just north of downtown Elsie.

The homey shop at 116 N. Ovid Street closed March 17, but Ott is gearing up for a hoped-for May 1 reopening.



Dawn Parker/City Pulse

"We decided the shop was something the community needed and something they hopefully would embrace," Ott said last week.

The building, which spent time as a TV repair shop among many other uses, closed for business a full week prior to Gov. Whitmer's issuance of the Stay Home, Stay Safe order.

Ott said she could see where things were going. Schools had been closed since the previous Thursday, and foot traffic was already at a standstill.

"I knew we had to do something," Ott said.

With the reopening, sweet treats like peanut butter cake and cherry bars will return to the counter. Ott does the majority of the baking, and creates arguably some of the best sausage gravy and biscuits to be had in Greater Lansing.

Ott said once Perx and Pastries reopens, staff will make sure everything is clean and customers are safe. They'd do the same for her, after all.

"Our customers have been very supportive and encouraging," Ott said. "They can't wait to get back in the door, and I'm encouraged by that."



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A local favorite reopens in Okemos

By DAWN PARKER

East side Asian food fans: Have you missed Asian Buffet since the stay-in-place order? Have you had to rely on frozen General Tso's chicken?

Your wait is over.

The popular — and acclaimed — Okemos cafeteria-style restaurant has reopened for both take-out and delivery services. Henry Kwok, whose family owns and operates the buffet, has "Henry's Place" next door.

Asian Buffet
Carryout: Yes
Delivery: Yes
4920 Marsh Rd, Okemos
(517) 381-8388

Asian Buffet's new hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., daily. Henry's Place, which is a more adult-oriented bar and grill, remains closed for the time being.

The decision to reopen after a six-week hiatus does have some practical considerations behind it.



Courtesy

Asian Buffet reopened last week in Okemos. It offers takeout and delivery.

"We've been closed so long, there are still electric bills and rent bills we still need to pay," Kwok said. "A lot of our employees need the job, need the money. We need to start back out at least at half-operations to get things done, get bills paid, and get our employees back working again." The two restaurants have 16 to 20 employees between them.

"We hope most of our staff will come back," Kwok said, while recognizing the possibility some employees would be uneasy about returning to restaurant life because of the possibility of future similar shutdowns due to widespread illness.

Meanwhile, the plan for Asian Buffet is to start slowly with a take-out menu, something Kwok said the family-owned business hasn't done a great deal of before now.

"That's something we will have to adapt to and probably do more of in the future," he added.

Offering delivery is a new service for the restaurant. They plan to offer the service within a three- to five-mile radius, which takes in much of East Lansing and Haslett. Keeping a tight circle, he added, also ensures orders arrive swiftly and hot.

Kwok said they plan to make deliveries with their own employees, rather than farming out the responsibility to one of the delivery superpowers.

"The Grub Hubs and the Door Dashes, they take too much of the commission," Kwok said.

At least in the beginning, Kwok said they'll stick to Asian Buffet's existing takeout menu, which includes mainstays like crab rangoon and egg rolls to start and main dishes like sweet and sour chicken and chop suey. Family meals — a set menu of dishes in amounts to feed a couple or a crowd — could also be done, Kwok believes.

A lot of support is expected from regular customers who Kwok said have been keeping in touch via telephone and social media.

"I think people are getting more excited," he said.









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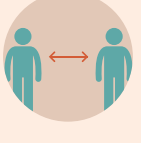
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