

The WEDGE

December 2023/January 2024 | Vol. 45 No. 6

Official Newspaper of the South Wedge Since 1982
Published by The South Wedge Planning Committee



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Holiday
Gift Guide
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Asylum Seekers Arrive in the Flower City: What's the Impact on the South Wedge?

For Rochester, it unquestionably has been one of the stories of 2023: Asylum seekers finding refuge in the Flower City.

Though the South Wedge neighborhood might be slightly more than a stone's throw away from downtown's State Street, what happens inside center city — good or bad — doesn't necessarily always stay within the confines of the inner loop.

So, *The WEDGE* explored whether or not the recent arrival of asylum seekers to Rochester has had any impact on the South Wedge or other city neighborhoods. So far, effects, if any, seem to be minimal, according to merchants and others.

"We have not been impacted by asylum seekers at this point, but we have seen an overall increase in people coming to us for assistance," Jasmin Reggler, house coordinator at St. Jo-



Jasmin Reggler

seph's House of Hospitality, 402 South Ave., said.

Other South Wedge businesses shared similar experiences of not seeing immediate effects — but some expressed openness to the prospect of new neighbors.

"I am glad our city is welcoming them and trying to assist," Chris Jones, of Historic Houseparts Inc. and The Period Bath Supply Co., 528-540 South Ave., said.

Daniel Reichman, professor of anthropology at the University of Rochester, said forecasting potential long-range impacts on Rochester neighborhoods from the arrival of asylum seekers is especially difficult due to the process by which many of them landed in the Flower City.

"Unlike refugee arrivals, which are planned in coordination with local organizations, the



Daniel Reichman

current system is a chaotic free-for-all, which leaves states, counties and municipalities on the hook to deal with a problem created at the federal level," Reichman said.

Locally, after the Monroe County Department of Human Services approved an emergency housing order (subject to review every 30 days), more than 200 asylum seekers arrived in Rochester from New York City in late summer, according to published news reports. Services and expenses are covered by New York City, Gary Walker, Monroe County's communications director, told *The WEDGE*.

Some of the asylum seekers in Rochester remain at the Holiday Inn, 70 State St. One recent group of arrivals included a near-even mix of adults and children hailing from Columbia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela, according to news reports.

With help from the Ibero-American Action League Inc., 14 families have transitioned to apartments, Rochester City Council President Miguel Meléndez Jr. said. Meléndez, who also serves as Ibero's chief community engagement

ASYLUM SEEKERS, p. 12

COUNCIL REPS EASILY RE-ELECTED

Each of the Rochester City Council members representing portions of the South Wedge neighborhood were re-elected Nov. 7.

Mary Lupien (D-East District) ran unopposed, while LaShay Harris (D-South District), in unofficial results, garnered 80% of ballots cast to easily fend off a Working Families Party challenger.

In County Legislature races in districts covering swaths of the South Wedge, Albert Blankley (D-24th) and Carolyn Hoffman (D-25th) each ran unopposed.

In other races for high-profile positions, incumbent County Executive Adam Bello (D) received almost 61% of votes cast to easily defeat challenger, former Gates Town Supervisor Mark Assini (R). District Attorney Sandra Doorley (R) ran unopposed. ▲

► **Michael Saffran**
msaffran@swpc.org



LaShay Harris

Mary Lupien

Nov. 7 General Election Unofficial Results

City Council (East):
Mary Lupien (D/WF): 97.59%

City Council (South):
LaShay Harris (D): 79.73%
Barbara Rivera (WF): 19.92%

Source: Monroe County

Organization Assists With Housing Needs

A decade ago, while working in health care and social services, respectively, Chuck Albanese and Nick Coulter were frustrated watching the same homeless clients run into walls with services because of issues with paperwork and follow-through. Few were able to stabilize without a coordinated comprehensive plan.

"We were seeing people in the system die on the streets before we could get help to them," Coulter said.

There had to be a better system.

Albanese, now CEO/president, and Coulter, now chief development officer and community engagement/executive vice president of

Person Centered Housing Options, researched programs and models and networked with local service agencies. By 2015, they settled on the "Housing First" model, established Person Centered Housing Options (or PCHO) and began their outreach program on Rochester's streets to connect the unhoused with services. Contracting with Providence Development Housing, PCHO placed clients in apartments so they could get government IDs and apply for employment.

Getting people into housing is crucial to stability, Albanese said.

"I have to mention [Abraham] Maslow," Al-

banese said. "Every time you talk about 'Housing First,' it's Psych 101 — the 'hierarchy of needs.' It's that simple. If that foundational part of the pyramid — those basic needs — aren't met, it's very hard to self-actualize."

Albanese explained that not every person is expected to reach the pinnacle of self-actualization, but any progress on the hierarchy for socialization, employment, confidence and relationships depends on attaining the most basic needs of shelter, food and clothing. PCHO's Housing Stability Coordinators manage personalized plans for clients. Once a person has

HOUSING, p. 9

Public Comment Sought on 'ZAP' Proposal

The City of Rochester has released its final Zoning Alignment Project (commonly called ZAP) proposal for public comment.

It's vital that city residents and businesses understand the effects of this new code. A group of southeast neighborhood leaders has been reviewing the proposals, identifying those with the most impact and crafting comments for city officials — time consuming and tedious, but important to the future and vitality of the neighborhoods.

Aside from trying to determine guidelines and restrictions for the hot topic of Air B&Bs and other short-term rentals, this version of ZAP has already made changes to its previous versions that South Wedge Planning Committee and other groups supported. The following is an example of one of those changes:

In 2019, prior to the adoption of the Rochester 2034 Comprehensive Plan, some of these

same leaders identified and defended particular tenets of the 2034 Plan that were important to the South Wedge area, such as maintaining the neighborhood character: A mix of mostly Victorian residential streets crossed by commercial arterials (South Clinton, South and Mount Hope avenues) with mainly "neighborhood scale" (one- to five-story buildings) mixed-use strips of retail or office spaces.

South Wedge Planning Committee also was specific about finding ways to preserve the historic architecture and neighborhood history of this eclectic urban village. The organization was able to change the 2034 Plan proposal from Flexible Mixed-Use of six- to nine-story development along the arterials to Neighborhood Mixed-Use (or NMU), a friendlier and more appropriate one to four stories.

In the current ZAP proposal, the city has re-defined the NMU height as up to 65 feet, which

is six stories rather than four. Properties on the corridors — where NMU is most prevalent — are, in most cases, adjacent to two- to three-story homes, which will be dwarfed by 40 or 50 feet of brick and mortar. Additionally, only those buildings with a certain amount of square footage will need to provide parking plans. Below that square footage, customers and tenants will be expected to use what is available: area parking lots and on-street parking on the surrounding residential streets.

The city says this is to encourage alternative modes of transportation such as buses and bikes and to discourage the use of automobiles. The historic homes on adjacent narrow streets, many of which have no driveways, will be increasingly stressed. This is one example of how the new zoning code could impact the South Wedge if people do not speak up.

PUBLIC COMMENT, p. 12

The WEDGE Gets Read!

In Brief

Non-emergency city-services online portal launches

311 Live, a new online portal to access City of Rochester services, officially launched Oct. 20. According to a news release from the city, 311 Live can be used, via a computer or mobile device, to request non-emergency services such as refuse or recycling pickup; report potholes, broken streetlights, trash/debris or other issues; and inquire about parking tickets. It's intended to supplement phone service, which receives about 300,000 calls a year, according to the city. Go to cityofrochester.gov/311 or, from within city limits, dial 311 to reach a representative, 7 a.m.–9 p.m., Monday–Friday; and 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturday–Sunday (closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day).

City names budget director

Suzanne Warren has been named the new director of the city's Office of Management and Budget, effective Jan. 1. Warren, currently assistant director, succeeds Michael Burns, who will become deputy mayor. Mayor Malik Evans said of Warren: "She is a proven and strong leader and has the expertise to serve as the city's primary custodian of its finances."

Mayor visits 'sister city' in France

Mayor Malik Evans in October visited Rochester's "sister city," Rennes, France. During the trip, he joined in celebrating the renaming of a city square after Frederick Douglass. Kenneth Morris Jr., president of the Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives, based in Rochester, and a direct descendant of Douglass, accompanied the mayor on the trip. A delegation from Rennes visited Rochester last May.

Lupien attends Mich. schools panel

City Council Vice President Mary Lupien (D-East District) in October visited Milwaukee Public Schools for panel discussions. Lupien was among local leaders from across the country attending the event, which covered topics such as school safety, trauma-informed care and collaborative efforts to address school-funding gaps. "I look forward to learning from Milwaukee Public Schools' innovative approaches and bringing valuable insights back to the Rochester community," Lupien said ahead of the trip.

Ribbon-cutting held

Mayor Malik Evans and the South Clinton Merchant Association hosted an Oct. 26 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of three new establishments — M/Body, 739 S. Clinton Ave., Crisp Rochester, 819 S. Clinton Ave., and Bookeater, 836 S. Clinton Ave. — and to honor Pat's Coffee Mug, 627 S. Clinton Ave., which recently marked 30 years in business. Plus, a neighborhood bench project with metal sculptor Stacey Mrva was celebrated.

Wedge road-paving projects continue

In one of the latest stages of the South Avenue reconstruction project, South Avenue between Bellevue Drive to Highland Avenue was to be milled and paved Oct. 17–23. Each of three separate projects in the same vicinity — South Avenue between Bellevue and Elmwood Avenue; Elmwood between Mount Hope and South avenues; and South between Elmwood and East Henrietta Road — are scheduled to be completed before winter.

Cemetery tours set

Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery invites visitors to experience the cemetery's beauty this winter. Sixty- to 90-minute tours, covering the history of Mount Hope Cemetery and highlighting famous Rochester citizens buried in the cemetery's south end, are entirely on flat, paved and plowed roads.

Winter tours start at 11 a.m. on the last Saturday of January, February and March. They begin at the south entrance (across from The Distillery, 1142 Mt. Hope Ave.). January's tour will be on Jan. 27.

Pet-fostering program offered

Due to overcrowding in the city's animal shelter, Rochester Animal Services offered a Thanksgiving Holiday Fostering Program. Individuals fostering a pet for a week during the holiday were offered food and other supplies. At week's end, adoption fees were waived for new "forever families." Visit Rochester Animal Services, 184 Verona St., or go to cityofrochester.gov/rochesteranimalservices for information on how to participate in pet-fostering programs.

Holidays at the Market sets hours

Holidays at the Market will be held 8 a.m.–2 p.m. Sundays Dec. 3 and 10 and 6–9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, at the City of Rochester Public Market, 280 N. Union St. **Michael Saffran**
msaffran@swpc.org



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Jaslynn is a Registered Nurse and has worked in the Observation Unit for 4 years.

Corrections ... Amplifications

- An article on page 9 of the August/September issue of *The WEDGE* gave an incorrect first name of one of the co-hosts for the "TYFU: Thank You For Understanding" podcast. The co-host's name is Bethany. The other co-host, Marilla Gonzalez, owner of Marilla's Mindful Supplies, 661 South Ave., describes her business as having a "mindful mission."
- An article and photo caption on page 4 of the October/November edition of *The WEDGE* incorrectly spelled the surname of Rochester-based artist Jutta Zelazny. Zelazny's artwork can be viewed at Café Sasso, 739 Park Ave., and, in March, at St. John's Home, 150 Highland Ave.

The WEDGE apologizes for the errors.

THE WEDGE GETS READ!

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Spice Up Your Life

Merriya Valleri
merriya@stuartspices.com

Harvest Holiday Casserole

Autumn is our absolute favorite time of year when it comes to cooking! The harvest is abundant with fresh vegetables — and having the entire house warm and smelling delicious from the oven is always wonderful. Our Harvest Holiday Casserole is an excellent way to stave off the chilly weather and get into the cooking spirit. You get to choose which vegetables to use and we guarantee there won't be any wrong choices!

Ingredients:

- 6 cups of fall vegetables (we recommend carrots, butternut squash, rutabaga and Brussels sprouts)
- 1 package biscuit mix, prepared according to instructions
- 1 tablespoon *Stuart's Spices Pumpkin Pie Spice*
- Stuart's Spices Corn on the Cob Seasoning*
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 6 tablespoons flour
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- Olive oil

Instructions:

Cut the vegetables into equal-sized pieces
Toss with oil and a generous amount of *Corn on the Cob Seasoning*
Roast in oven at **400° F** for **15-20** minutes, or until vegetables are tender
While the vegetables are roasting, make a roux with equal amounts butter and flour
Thin with vegetable broth — a little at a time
Add about **1** tablespoon of the *Pumpkin Pie Spice* and stir
Pour mixture over the roasted fall vegetables and pour into casserole dish or a **9x13** inch pan
Top with dollops of biscuit
Bake in preheated oven at **350° F** for **35** minutes, until top is baked golden brown and mixture is bubbling
Serve and enjoy! ▲
Long-time baker and amateur chef Merriya Valleri is a spice merchant and social media manager at Stuart's Spices, 754 S. Clinton Ave. In her spare time, she enjoys trying out new recipes, writing on rainy days and going for walks with her family.



The WEDGE Card 2023

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Happy Earth Tea, 10% off
696 South Ave.

Mark's Texas Hots
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487 Monroe Ave.

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Glynis Valenti, executive director
Position to be filled, market manager
Myeisha Wesson, construction manager

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Send story ideas or news to: The WEDGE, 224 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620 or email to: thewedge@swpc.org. Advertising deadlines and rates are available online at swpc.org or by calling 585.256.1740, ext. 4.

Statement

SWPC builds community in the South Wedge, encourages a full range of housing opportunities and promotes a diverse, historically significant, commercially sustainable urban village.

Join SWPC in Community Building

The South Wedge Planning Committee (SWPC) invites you to help us make a difference in southeast Rochester by joining our board of directors or serving on a committee. Founded in 1978, SWPC, works as a conduit for federal or state repair grants that help keep people in their aging homes. It builds community through the South Wedge Farmers Market, South Wedge Victory Gardens on Hamilton and Cypress Streets and The WEDGE newspaper that publishes six issues a year.

Your time, talent and commitment can help us to continue SWPC's work. If interested, call 256-1740, ext. 4, or email Executive Director Glynis Valenti at gvalenti@swpc.org or Board Chair Frank Logan at flogan@rochester.rr.com.

South Wedge Planning Committee Meetings

The community is invited to attend all SWPC meetings held at 224 Mt. Hope Ave. (Hamilton Street entrance)

Dec./Jan. Calendar
SWPC Board 6 p.m. Wed.

Dec. 20, Jan. 17

For info, email:

flogan@rochester.rr.com

Community Engagement
(Neighbors & Block Clubs)

5:30 p.m. Wed., Dec./Jan. TBA
gvalenti@swpc.org

Articles, columns and essays in *The WEDGE* do not reflect the views and/or opinions of the South Wedge Planning Committee.

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Business & Neighborhoods

Crepe and Go opens on South Clinton

Swillburg has a new Asian restaurant: Crepe and Go, on the corner of Meigs Street and South Clinton Avenue. The informal take-out and dine-in restaurant, offering Chinese crepes, Thai and more, takes the place of neighborhood favorite Flavors of Asia.

Crepe and Go Manager Scarlett Chan said her brother and owner Ai San's first restaurant was on Monroe Avenue, but he jumped at the chance to move to Swillburg when the location became available.

The menu is long and begins with expected and unexpected appetizers like "Pork Presere Egg Congee," six soups and dishes that ask diners to "choose your protein and option."

Options include fried rice and noodles from Singapore Mei Fun and Thai Masamum; and

proteins fried tofu, chicken, BBQ pork, beef and shrimp. The restaurant's signature crepes number seven and range between "traditional" and "Cumin lamb crepe."

Crepe and Go's drink menu also offers some new choices like cans of "Hot-Kid Milk Flavored Drink" and Jia Duo Bao herbal tea, Vietnamese coffee, and bubble-tea flavors honey dew, watermelon and taro. ▲

► Nancy O'Donnell Hale
nodonnell@swpc.org



- Crepe & Go (former Flavors of Asia location)
- 831 S. Clinton Ave.
- Hours: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday; noon-9 p.m. Sunday (closed Wednesday)
- Website: crepengo.com

Martine moves into former nightspot

A new nightspot has opened in the South Wedge.

Martine (pronounced: mar-TEEN) cocktail bar, 647 South Ave., opened Oct. 5 in the former Solera & Cheshire wine and cocktail bar location. It specializes in cocktails (that it spells "kocktails") and serves an assortment of beer, wine and light snacks.

Martine is owned by Chuck Cerankosky. Will Cornfield manages the two-floor bar, which is open 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. Thursday through Monday and features a new sound system and exposed brick motif.

Martine's opening came four months to the day after Cheshire & Solera's last day of business on June 5. ▲

► Michael Saffran
msaffran@swpc.org



- Martine (pronounced: "mar-TEEN")
- 647 South Ave. (former Cheshire & Solera location)
- Hours: 5 p.m.-2 a.m. Thursday-Monday
- Website: martine-rochester.com
- Related: See review on page 8

Highland Market's new owners plan to add catering, healthy-food options

Friends with former long-time Highland Market owners the Stefanou family, Aaron and Stephanie DeBlieck bought the store, at 830 South Ave., on Sept. 7 (and re-opened two days later).

While Aaron DeBlieck primarily handles the store's kitchen (including beverages and prepared foods), Stephanie balances working at the market with her full-time job as kitchen manager at Northside and Dudley elementary schools in the Fairport Central School District.

"We were friends with the old owners, and we purchased the business from them with the intention of keeping it mostly the same but adding more prepared foods and eventually catering," Stephanie DeBlieck said. "We also want to add more vegetarian and healthy-food options, as well, so people can make it a one-stop shop, if necessary."

People are already raving about the weekly fish fries, she said.

The market has a beer and cider license, anticipates offering an online menu and accepts EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer).

"We're getting adjusted now and bringing in groceries, resetting the store a bit," Stephanie DeBlieck said. "We do want to keep the Greek foods. Slowly, but surely, our little market in the South Wedge is coming along. Stop in to check out what we got, and tell us also what you would like to see more of." ▲

► Nancy O'Donnell Hale
nodonnell@swpc.org



Aaron and Stephanie DeBlieck are the news owners of Highland Market, 830 South Ave. They closed on their purchase of the store on Sept. 7 — and re-opened the market two days later.

- Highland Market
- 830 South Ave.
- Hours: 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday (hours will be expanded in the spring)
- Website: highlandmarketroc.com

For Buffalo Bills Fans in the Wedge, Hope Springs Eternal

It seems to happen every year.

During summer training camp at St. John Fisher University, in Pittsford, and for the first few weeks of the NFL season, fan expectations

for the Buffalo Bills typically are sky high — only to be eventually dashed (almost absurdly, it seems).

It might happen by the slow torture of another up-and-down season (as this year's, as of this writing, is shaping up to be) ... by the prolonged misery of 17 straight years (2000–2016) of not making the playoffs ... or, once, by a heart-stopping, soul-crushing "wide right" missed field goal (with eight seconds remaining) — beginning a run of four straight Super Bowl losses.

And let's not even talk about "13 seconds" or the "Music City Miracle" nightmares (each is still too raw of a memory for most Bills fans).

But like backers of all teams — in every sport — hope springs eternal (hey, if the Chicago Cubs can win the World Series after 108 years, anything is possible, right?).

The WEDGE reached out to some neighborhood night spots and social-gathering places — particularly those where one might just catch the big game, Super Bowl LVIII, Feb. 11, in Las Vegas —

asking if they have anything "super" planned in the event QB Josh Allen leads the Bills, and "Bills Mafia" fans, all the way to the pro-sports promised land.

As the list below suggests, there seems to be as much optimism in the South Wedge as there is in Orchard Park, in September, before the first pass of the season is thrown. ▲

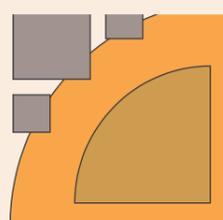
► Michael Saffran
msaffran@swpc.org



- **Boulder Café and Lounge** — 100 Alexander St.: If the Bills make it to the Super Bowl, anyone wearing Bills gear will receive 10% off their purchase on Super Bowl Sunday.
- **Crisp Rochester** — 819 S. Clinton Ave.: Drink and beer specials — including a new Bloody Mary (it's going to be HUGE) — and a tailgating board fit for a queen or king! (Even if the Bills don't reach the Super Bowl!)
- **The Distillery** — 1142 Mt. Hope Ave.: Half-price chicken wings, two-for-one mimosas and frozen house margaritas, and half-time drawing for a Distillery gift card and other prizes.

- **Pizza Wizard** — 760 S. Clinton Ave.: \$10 Pepperoni Square pizza deal on Super Bowl Sunday, if the Bills make it to the big game.
- **Playhouse Swillburger** — 820 S. Clinton Ave.: If the Bills reach the Super Bowl, the kitchen will serve up a "Josh's Jaqs" crusted fried-chicken sandwich with "Diggs 14 Elite Hot Sauce" and the bar will give \$1 off Buffalo Bills-themed beers from Buffalo Breweries on Super Bowl Sunday.

#GoBills!



Adjacent to the Wedge

Upper Mount Hope/
College Town

Mount Hope adds two pizza spots, loses long-time car-repair shop

New businesses are now open in the Upper Mount Hope/College Town area of Rochester — including an old favorite for pizza:

■ **Bay & Goodman Pizza**, 1687 Mt. Hope Ave. (Mount Hope Plaza) opened Sept. 12 in the former Pontillo's Pizzeria location. Bay & Goodman Pizza is run by Matthew Piccarreto, son of Larry Piccarreto, who operated Bay & Goodman Pizza, 690 N. Winton Road, until it closed in March 2022. Open 11 a.m.–9 p.m. Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–10 p.m. Friday–Saturday and 1 p.m.–9 p.m. Sunday. Phone 442-6865 or go to baygoodman.com.

Pontillo's still runs 14 other Rochester-area pizzeria locations. The WEDGE reached out to Pontillo's asking about its decision to leave the Mount Hope location but had not received a reply by press time.

■ **Jasmine Restaurant & Café**, 1761

Mt. Hope Ave., featuring Mediterranean dishes, opened last spring (originally, under the same ownership, as Patato's Restaurant Café). Owned by Khaled Alkaissi, hours are 11 a.m.–9 p.m. Monday–Thursday and 11 a.m.–10 p.m. Friday–Saturday. Go to jasmainerestaurantcafe.com.



■ **Mavrik's Pizza**, 1290 Mt. Hope Ave., recently opened in a former Cam's Pizzeria location. Run by the same owners as was Cam's, Mavrik's is family-owned-and-operated. Hours are 11:15 a.m.–8:30 p.m. Monday–Saturday and 11:15 a.m.–7:30 p.m.

Sunday. Phone 256-7437 or go to mavrik-spizzas.com. There are still five separate Rochester-area Cam's locations.

■ **Mount Hope Service Center**, 1471 Mt. Hope Ave., has closed. ▲

► Michael Saffran
msaffran@swpc.org

Neighborhoods



Swillburg Shoutout

Mike Henry
swillburg1@aol.com

The year progresses with falling leaves and Swillburg celebrates our seventh Harvest Festival!

Some 80 neighbors on Nov. 9 enjoyed food, speakers and the raffle of more than \$1,300 in prizes. As well, an extensive line of Swillburg swag was vended, attracting many buyers. It was an evening to celebrate our unique urban cottage district and testified to our being woven by a strong sense of community.

The event itself served to further tighten that weave as we visited, listened and interacted with speakers from the neighborhood who updated us on their particular community undertakings:



Swillburg resident Josh Jacobs (right) works the "swag" table, Nov. 9, as the neighborhood celebrated its seventh Harvest Festival. (Photo by Judy Hay)

Dave Fergusson on the progress of community gardens, Meghan Critelli on the value of the annual Clean Sweep, Brady Ferguson appealing on a "pledge" to keep winter sidewalks clear of snow and Josh Jacobs giving a report on SWAG shop and website.

In addition, Rochester Police Department Deputy Chief of Special Operations Keith Stith summarized his role to breakdown barriers between youth and police and improve police and community engagement. Also, we send our thanks to Lt. Rob Wilson, of the Community Affairs Bureau, who was present.

We also heard from School 35 Principal

Valerie Holberton, who spoke of collaboration with the community, summarized school programs and announced a pre-school program about to commence. Holberton also accepted donations of school supplies collected by Swillburg and Upper Monroe neighbors as well as Artisan Church members.

From the South East Area Coalition's Fundraising and Outreach Coordinator Kiki Smith, we were updated on the progress of their tool library and encouraged to make use of that as well as of their instructional workshops on home maintenance and repair.

The fantastic raffle, conducted by neighbor Bob Palmer, included donations from several

local businesses: Bay Creek Paddling Center, Bookeater, Crepe and Go, Crisp Rochester, The Club Room, Highland Park Diner, Home Depot, India House, Jack Mars Glass and Metal Artworks, Natural Pets Foods, ROC Cinema, Rooney's Restaurant, Salvatore's Pizzeria, SEAC, Stuart's Spices, Swillbarber, Zemeta Ethiopian Restaurant and Wegmans. To these businesses we offer our great thanks!

In addition we received a donation of two platters of food from Pellegrino's! It was truly fun to work together and to come together and further our acquaintances and friendships as a community. We so appreciate all who attended and participated in many ways! Also, a big shout out of appreciation to Artisan Church for use of their wonderful facilities! Hope you enjoy the holiday season! ▲

Mike Henry, a retired Monroe County social worker, has lived in Swillburg for 32 years and been intermittently active with the Swillburg Neighborhood Association since 1993. He has been "car-free" since 2003 and finds the South Wedge even more appealing up close by bike.

Walking for Rochester has hopes for cleaner city streets in 2024

Supporters attending Walking for Rochester's second annual fund-raiser Oct. 19 at Divinity Estate & Chapel, 1100 South Goodman St., learned that area city streets are a lot cleaner because of the organization's founder and CEO Matt Apple.

In 2022-2023, Apple led 75 events and invited 360 volunteer to collect an estimated 4,197 pounds from city streets.

Rich Perrin, the City of Rochester's commissioner of environmental services, noted at the event that the city is interested in working with the organization to make the city cleaner.

"Rich and I have yet to finalize the full details of [the mayor's] endorsement," writes Apple in an email to *The WEDGE*.

"During his speech at the fund-raiser last month, he mentioned three main things that the Mayor's Office wants to help out with," Apple said. "Provide equipment for all Walking for Rochester litter events, such as gloves, bags and grabbers; pick up the collected litter after every event; and include the group in community outreach efforts."

"I am thrilled about this, as you can imagine," Apple wrote. "I am full of questions too!"

Apple said that Walking for Rochester will be conducting a phone drive in early 2024.

"We are partnering with Three Heads Brewing to host this event in order to ask for old and unused Android phones. We need more volunteers using our mobile app to better serve our cause."

To learn more about Walking for Rochester and to volunteer for next year's events, go to Walking for Rochester on Facebook. ▲

► **Nancy O'Donnell Hale**
nodonnell@swpc.org



Matt Apple (standing at right), founder and CEO of Walking for Rochester, speaks at an Oct. 19 fund-raiser for the non-profit organization.

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The WEDGE Annual Holiday Gift Guide

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COFFEE CONNECTION
South Wedge nonprofit for women in recovery from substance abuse, trauma and incarceration. Organic, fair-trade coffee (regular and flavored), soup, quiche, baked goods from scratch, gift certificates. 681 South Ave., 442-2180. ourcoffeeconnection.org

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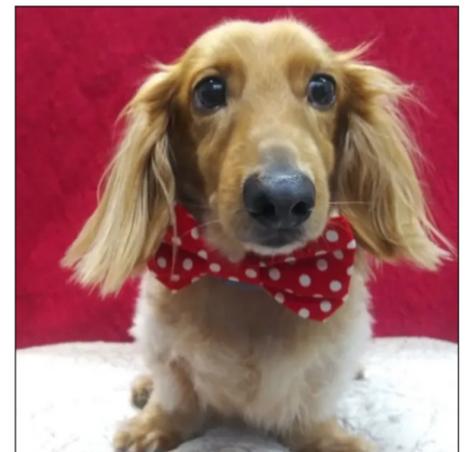
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Peace For Earth

South Wedge-area holiday services

Below are some churches/faith-based organizations within or nearby to the South Wedge neighborhood (including schedules of holiday religious services, if provided):

- Artisan Church**, 1235 S. Clinton Ave.
- Bible Baptist Temple**, 706 South Ave.
- Community of the Savior**, 4 E. Henrietta Road
- Congregation Beth Shalom**, 1161 Monroe Ave.
- Faith Church** (Pentecostal), 1876 Elmwood Ave.: 10 a.m. Dec. 24
- First Church of Christ, Scientist** (Christian Science), 701 Mt. Hope Ave.
- Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit**, 835 South Ave.
- South Wedge Mission** (Episcopal), 125 Caroline St.
- St. Boniface Church** (Roman Catholic), 330 Gregory St.: 4 p.m. Dec. 24 (pageant at 3:45 p.m.) and 9 a.m. Dec. 25. (Note: St. Boniface is part of the Southeast Rochester Catholic Community cluster; its other Christmas Masses are at **Blessed Sacrament Church**, 534 Oxford St.: 3:30 p.m. Dec. 24 and 10:30 a.m. Dec. 25; and **St. Mary's Church**, 15 St. Mary's Place: 4:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Dec. 24)
- St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church** (Christian Orthodox), 855 S. Goodman St.



Business & Neighborhoods

REVIEW

Early returns: Martine patrons give high marks to new 'cocktail' bar

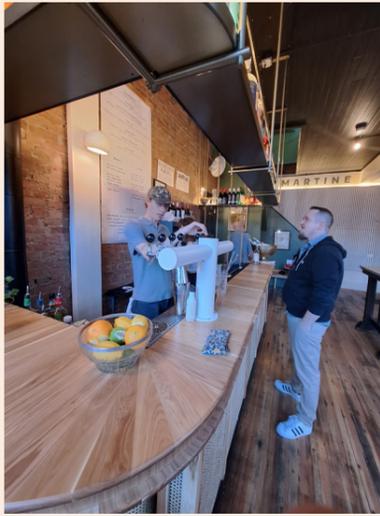
An exciting, new cocktail bar, Martine, has replaced Solera & Cheshire at 647 South Ave. — on the corner of South Avenue and Hickory Street. (Cheshire is resurrecting at South Clinton Avenue and Gregory Street.)

For Martine owner Chuck Cerankosky, a well-known food and cocktail “wunderkid” in the city and founder of the Rochester Cocktail Revival, Martine is his sixth endeavor.

On a busy night, bar manager Will Cornfield pours out pre-made cocktails — somewhere nearby, a keg has a brilliant mix of liquors on draft (aka “cocktails”) — along with wine and beer. Delicious nibbly noshables also are available.

Chicago-born, now Victor resident, Ari-an Horbovetz, better known as the “Urban Phoenix,” takes a seat on the light and airy first floor. The blogger/photographer, who began traveling around the state in January 2015 and featuring “hidden gems,” has turned to “conversations around the elements that create healthy cities, neighborhoods and communities today.”

“I loved seeing the city’s rebirth, seeing places pop up,” Horbovetz said, citing Trata’s, The Revelry and Solera & Cheshire. “I wanted to connect with places to go. I wanted to go out into a neighborhood on a Saturday night not for a Bud Light but a crafted cocktail. I wanted to support local businesses.”



He added: “It’s great to see downtown triple in population. We’re in a revival. The highway removal was important. This was an element other cities like Syracuse and Buffalo are not doing. We’ve done it.”

Horbovetz said he had such great memories of Solera & Cheshire that when he came to Martine’s he was expecting to be disappointed. But happily he wasn’t.

“It’s got the same vibe as Solera & Cheshire. It’s subtle and understated. It brought their energy into 2023,” he said.

It’s still debatable whether loyal Solera & Cheshire locals will flock to Martine. Its waitstaff said people

stopped in while the building was being renovated and made a few dour comments — along the lines of “This isn’t the South Wedge.”

Maybe that’s why there’s a saucy “cocktail” named “I Miss the Old South Wedge” on the menu?

Upstairs, in the former Cheshire space, software engineer Ian MacLean is succinct in his appreciation.

“I like the place,” MacLean said. “These are wonderful cocktails and the tap system brings a lot of efficiency. I’ve never had such a good cocktail so quickly and efficiently.”

► Nancy O’Donnell Hale
nodonnell@swpc.org

South Wedge ‘cat coalition’ promoted as solution for free-roaming felines

If you love cats and want to be part of the solution to Rochester’s large free-roaming cat population, RocKats is looking for volunteers in the South Wedge to join forces and create a South Wedge Community Cat coalition.

Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return, or TNVR, is the most humane and effective way to decrease the free-roaming cat population. Fixed outdoor cats don’t have litters of kittens, don’t fight, don’t smell and provide a natural source of rodent control.

Targeted TNVR, focused on a defined area, works best. Thanks to 19th Ward Community Cats, we know their concentrated efforts in this area of Rochester has had success at keeping the outdoor cat numbers stable. Not only that, they have also succeeded at keeping the free roaming cat population healthy, well-fed and sheltered from the elements.

The South Wedge is capable of similar success! Your neighborhood is fortunate to have many dedicated colony caretakers. Seven years ago, as many as 60 cats were TNVR’ed over the course of a few weeks in the South Wedge. Today, there are stable colonies of fixed cats whose feeders notify us when the occasional

newcomer or litter of kittens appear. Sometimes the wait for us to TNVR is long since we cover all areas of the city except the 19th Ward. Working from within, focused on your own community, you can help these cats more quickly.

Finally, there’s strength in numbers. A dedicated group has the ability to know the location of managed colonies, know the feeders (as well as their strengths and limitations), provide back-up feeding when a feeder takes a vacation or is ill, and join forces to build feeding stations and cat shelters. Benefits of working under your nonprofit community association include the ability to apply for grants to cover spay/neuter and other medical costs for the free-roaming cats and solicit donations of cat food from local food banks.

RocKats would be fully supportive of your efforts during your formative years and very glad to assist as needed. 19th Ward Cats, as well as volunteers from our group, would be happy to provide more information and answer questions at a time that is convenient for everyone! We look forward to hearing from you.►

Submitted by Gail D’Urso/gdurso0803@gmail.com

Neighbors Building Neighborhoods group discusses crime, zoning

Below are the official notes (edited for style and space) for the Oct. 9 Neighbors Building Neighborhoods meeting:

CRIME PREVENTION REPORTS

CENTRAL AND GENESEE SECTION

Officer Jim LaRue, reporting on South part of Central and Genesee Section 263 and 229, down Mount Hope to Alexander Street: 11 vehicle thefts; 14 other larcenies; one aggravated assault (at 1331 Mt. Hope); one burglary (at the Dollar Tree on Mount Hope and Elmwood Avenue; officers were able to arrest suspect); one robbery (two unknown males brandishing a handgun took property from victim at 236 Alexander St. at 6 p.m. Sept. 27).

The majority of car thefts were Kias and Hyundais; seven larcenies (a couple stolen credit cards; the rest of items from car thefts varied); seven criminal mischiefs. Car thefts were at 261 Alexander St., 40 Veterans Drive, 315 Mt. Hope Ave., 287 Gregory St., 505 Mt. Hope Ave., 696 South Ave., 505 and 1133 Mt. Hope Ave. and two at Greenknolls and 253 Alexander St.

Q: Do the larcenies include the problems at Episcopal Home and Pellegrino’s?

A: Yes, there is now increased police presence on Mount Hope and South.

Q: Any info on window being broken out on Frederick Douglas Library on South Avenue?

A: Not at this time.

GOODMAN SECTION

Lt. Wilson: No info on the burglary at library at this time. One reported burglary at 200 block of Field Street; jewelry stolen believed to be a domestic. Two robberies: 1 a.m. Oct. 1; four suspects took car in low numbers of Cayuga Street. Oct. 5 at low numbers of Manor Parkway — victim was walking to work, robbed by two suspects. Victim punched suspects then went to Highland Hospital and reported crime. Cameras in area didn’t show anything happened. Six car larcenies: Rockingham, Oakland, Highland, Mount Vernon and Benton (robberies from cars with windows broken). The one on Rockingham was entry without break-in. Car theft: Cadillac stolen because the key fob left in vehicle and 1300 block South Avenue: Elantra, keys left in car.

Homicide at Manor Parkway, female victim deceased, no forced entry.

Q: Was a firearm used?

A: Don’t know; appeared to be deceased a day or two.

Benton St. MVA at South Clinton and Field Street, victim chased suspect who took off, ran into apartment building. Victim then called the police; the suspect not found.

Q: Police called to Lansdale; was it something serious?

A: Nothing in report, probably a simple domestic.

Q: Couple of other windows broken on South Avenue, and Pat’s Coffee on South Clinton; are you seeing a lot of these, is it just vandalism?

A: There have been a lot of windows broken over the last couple of months. Unfortunately some people do that. There have been a bunch of car windows broken; 14 cars, some on Boardman, and other streets.

Q: 100 block of Highland Avenue; smashed car window. Was it a parking lot or private residence?

A: 150 Highland Ave., broke window and took sneakers.

Capt. Person: Today is first official day of reorganization, everyone here (NBN6 neighborhoods) switching over to Goodman Section under Capt. Elwood.

Thank you Lt. Cotsworth for being here.

Q: Do have an email?

A: RPDHomelessoutreach@cityofrochester.gov

NSC REPORT: ERICA HERNANDEZ, ADMINISTRATOR FOR SENS

Having conversations about safety and security items. Street Liaison Julia Hayden will be leaving, so if you hear of a business interested in small matching grant, please refer them to SENS.

Q: Any updates or general information about



landscaping work at Broadway and Meigs?

A: Getting things cleaned up to do some maintenance.

Q: Have they straightened around building Blocks on City data portal?

A: Don’t know; best person to speak to would be Henry Fitz.

In this year’s budget, bringing on part time code enforcement officer in the commercial corridors (so if know anyone who would be a good fit have them contact me). In terms of in house grants, the only active one is our hot water tank. If need other help, have them contact the NSC. Will help connect if possible. Currently roofing grants from last year being worked on now until funds run out. If know of someone who is in dire need, have them contact us.

Q: Looking for someone to be a commercial district outreach?

A: Looking for a code inspector 20 hours a week. Pay starts at \$20/hour.

Q: Could it be a full-time position if connected with another NSC?

A: Becomes an issue because of benefits.

NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS DISCUSS KEY ISSUES IN

ZONING ALLIANCE PROJECT AND WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND THE OCT. 18 ZONING REWRITE WEBINAR

On Sept. 20, Zoning Alignment Project final draft was released for comment. After this round of feedback, it will go to City Council for an up or down vote. Neighborhood leaders sat down and looked over the draft and want to introduce you to the issues so you have some info for the Oct. 18 meeting.

Glynis Valenti, executive director of South Wedge Planning Committee, talked about the process in the 2034 plan approved in 2019 offered our comments to the city in six weeks. Our position was to maintain the historic character of the South Wedge and South East. The proposed code increases densities from R2 single and doubles, to Medium Density homes up to four or five family units. Apparent decrease in public input on zoning change under the new code. Prior to this, we were informed by postcards if something was going to happen in your neighborhood which is not the case anymore. It is vital to let people know what’s going on in the neighborhood. Personal opinion does not value the historic neighborhoods or quality of life in the neighborhoods, prior were able to monitor usage. The Manager of Zoning will have cart blanche to approve building changes, without any opportunity for neighborhood input or communication. Our comments and concerns are on swpc.org.

Linda Baier, Azalea Neighborhood Leader: Low Density Residential and Medium Density Residential (LDR and MDR); Low Density related to boarding houses, ADUs. The Neighborhood Leaders do not support boarding houses in LDRs and MDRs they impact quality of life for other neighborhood homeowners with

NEIGHBORS, p. 9

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Neighborhoods

NEIGHBORS (from p. 8)

quality of noise and increased parking. Certificate of Occupancy and inspection of the property needs to assure attics, porches and basements are not being used for sleeping quarters. Owner occupancy needs to be assured. This would eliminate sororities and fraternities in LDRs and MDRs. Accessory Dwelling Units being prohibited in LDRs is supported by the Neighborhood Leaders and they would like to include MDRs to the inclusion as lot size would prohibit privacy to the closest homes as well as parking and noise issues. Short Term Rentals: Neighborhood leaders support the exclusion of short term rentals in LDRs and MDRs. Short term rentals in LDRs and MDRs limits families from purchasing a home as opposed to investors. Major question: What will be done with existing short term rentals in LDRs and MDRs with adoption of ZAP? Neighborhood Leaders strongly urge the enforcement of the code not to allow short term rentals in LDRs and MDRs.

Bob Thompson, Highland Park Neighborhood Association, shared a PowerPoint with definitions for the new zoning, the current zoning map (RochesterZAP.com) and see what's going to happen in the future. Most of neighborhood mixed uses are intended to build density along major corridors. Within each of the major neighborhood uses there are specific items that can be allowed along the arterials. BDR (Boutique Mixed Use), NMU (Neighborhood Mixed Use) part of the arterials are changing to FMU (Flexible Mixed Use). Need to be aware of these concepts for the meeting

Jane Morgan, Hickory Nuts Neighborhood Association president: This whole plan is to encourage more density in the neighborhoods. The South Wedge would increase 128% of its parcels. Bed and Breakfast must be owner-occupied, no more than 10 lodgers, no more than 31 days. Boarding houses offer lodging 31 consecutive days or more, and must be owner occupied. ADU Accessory Dwelling Unit — one could be attached to dwelling or a separate unit, must be owner occupied. Currently do not have code Enforcement officers to enforce these new zoning changes. ZAP requires so much code enforcement and no way to handle this.

Judy Hay: Designated Buildings of Historic Value are buildings identified with historical and architectural significance and listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. City also cited buildings on a 1980 Mack survey. The list of properties should not be limited by the decades-old Mack Survey, but include buildings now and going forward that may have historical significance. Many of these buildings can qualify for adaptive reuse such as former Calvary St. Andrew's, now proposed as boutique hotel and wedding venue.

Throughout ZAP the voice of the citizen had been diminished. Where legal Bed and Breakfast should have updated C of O, dedicated parking, and owner occupied. The city has established a vacant-building database that will be operative by January. City will require registration of vacant buildings to facilitate monitoring and enforcement. The city will establish

finances for vacant buildings. Throughout ZAP the major question is: How does this get enforced?

Lisa Reagan: This is the final draft available for comments, this is your opportunity to raise questions. After that, there will be in-person meetings, where you can go and ask questions. Those meetings are posted on RochesterZAP.com. If you give comments on ZAP, please email copies to neighborhood reps. All comments will be closed on Jan. 31. Will be two environmental impact meetings as well before that. If you need information as to where things are found, please contact neighborhood representative and NSCs.

Q: How many boarding houses are in the South Wedge?

A: No legal boarding houses in our six neighborhoods, many not legal boarding houses.

Q: Thought at one point 300K people living in Rochester, now 200K. Where did they go?

A: Back then families had five or six children and lost a lot of housing stock.

Comments: What a lot of work you all have done! Thank you. We need to be much less passive of these dates. Need to press upon our elected representatives what the neighborhoods want. Horrified to learn no longer notifications to neighborhoods on key zoning issues.

When City Council votes in the spring, will only be allowed an up or down vote.

Bob Thompson: Hearing process City Council aren't going to make any amendments. Include any comments to City Council members as well!

As neighborhood leaders, will be preparing comments to go to the Council, pretty relevant to all our neighborhoods!

Q: Who is the primary contact for code questions for Linden Street?

A: Glynis with SWPC. Also have community engagement meeting the fourth Wednesday of every month.

Need to be aware of the Place Making Plan, this zoning rewrite to put into the Code the place making plan passed by the City Council. Should compare this map to the Place Making Map.

Highland Parking garage: Neighborhood worked with the city to keep the garage at three floors. With the new plan, that property can now be over six stories, putting neighborhood houses in perpetual shadow in the winter.

Q: To what extent does the presidents' meeting discuss this?

A: Met with the presidents in this area, will meet again in November, and have asked for time for the presidents to discuss this among themselves.

Have not seen comments from other neighborhoods.

Comment: Every city in upstate NY except Rochester is receiving funding to build ADUs to cover the housing shortage, giving 200K to build attached, in the basement of your home or adjacent to the home.

Comment: Hasn't passed yet, but state considering passing a state-wide passage of ADUs, which would supersede our zoning. ▲

HOUSING (from p. 1)

a place to call home, PCHO can work on next steps, which could include mental and/or physical health assistance, recovery programs, finding employment, applying for food assistance and transportation — the key being maintaining contact.

In addition to outreach and permanent housing placement, the organization provides Health Home Care Management to link housing clients with health care; Rapid Rehousing, which places people in temporary housing with short-term financial assistance and case management as they transition to stable housing; and a Peer-Recovery Support Program that gives new clients encouragement, confidence and social-networking opportunities through role model clients that conquered homelessness. They work with countless community agencies such

as Rochester Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team, People In Crisis Team, Father Tracy Advocacy, YWCA and Huther Doyle — depending on the services needed.

According to PCHO's latest "Impact Report" this unique approach has resulted in more than 400 housed annually with a 93-96% rate of staying in those homes; outreach to 700 people annually with more than 300 engaging in the program; case management of approximately 174 individuals per month; distributing 4,000 pairs of socks; and 114 people receiving medical services. These programs also save around \$1,000 in tax dollars per month, costing \$512 in housing compared to \$1,500 in shelters.

PCHO's service area includes all of Monroe County and some surrounding communities; but, Coulter says, the South Wedge has one of

HOUSING, p. 12

Somewhere in the Wedge...



Do you know where this was taken? (Answer on page 12.)

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Viewpoints



LaShay Harris

Rochester City Council, South District
 LaShay.Harris@CityofRochester.gov

Holiday-season Greetings From South District Council Member

Thank you to the South District voters for granting me another term to serve our community as your councilwoman. I will work to get our community on track by improving public safety, city quality of life, workforce development and supporting solid neighborhoods.

There is so much to be grateful for as we approach the new year! I pray for the families of those dealing with challenges this year in the U.S. and abroad.

I never take for granted our freedoms and know that things could be worse. That being said, you can be confident I will always work hard to make things better.

The Rochester Animal Services is facing overcrowding this holiday season. Consider adopting a pet or becoming a foster home for a furry friend. Go tocityofrochester.gov/rochesteranimalservices.

Holidays with the City of Rochester:

■ The City has purchased its annual holiday tree, a Norway Spruce, from Barnes Tree Farm

of Hilton, N.Y. The City planned to light the tree on Nov. 29.

■ Join the holiday cheer downtown with the Liberty Pole Lighting and Family Parade to Roc Holiday Village (Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park at Manhattan Square, 353 Court St.). Festivities start at 5 p.m. on Dec. 2. A full schedule can be found at cityofrochester.gov/LibertyPoleLighting.



In closing, the holidays are considered a time for gatherings and being with family. Adopting a family or senior neighbor for the holidays would bring joy to individuals who are alone during the holidays and often have no familial resources.▲

LaShay Harris serves as chair of Rochester City Council's Recreation and Human Services Committee and works on the Neighborhood and Business Development and Public Safety committees. She grew up in the South District and served the city as a career paramedic for more than 25 years. She has been a CPR instructor for the American Heart Association since 2002.



Mary Lupien

Rochester City Council, East District
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Lupien: 'Unchecked Police Power: A Threat to Democracy'

The power wielded by the police if left unchecked has profound implications for our democracy. In a society that values justice, accountability and the preservation of civil liberties, it is crucial to address the alarming threat posed by the culture of impunity within the Rochester Police Department.

At the heart of our democratic principles lies the fundamental belief in the separation of powers, ensuring a system of checks and balances that prevents any single branch of government from monopolizing authority. Every individual, regardless of their profession or position, must be subject to the same laws and standards and when those entrusted to enforce the law instead break it, they must be held accountable. A lack of accountability fosters a culture of impunity, which not only undermines the very notion of justice but also erodes the public's faith in the institutions meant to protect and serve them.

One of the most pressing concerns is the ability of law enforcement to shape the public narrative without challenge. The news media publishes the words of police officers as if it were fact. Officers attend every neighborhood meeting and are allowed to spread their narrative unchecked. The power to control information is a formidable tool, capable of influencing public opinion and perception. When wielded without restraint, it can lead to a distorted reality, where the actions of the few are shielded from scrutiny, and dissenting voices are silenced.

In September, City Council members Martin, Smith and I released a statement that expressed concern over the wider pattern of police-involved shootings and the danger of accepting these occurrences as normal and acceptable as well as the attempt to sway public opinion against the man and to justify the officer's actions before the body-worn camera footage was released. According to the RPD's own General Orders, connecting a suspect to prior criminal activity and crime patterns is forbidden.

The political cost for us was high. We were accused by the RPD Union, the Locust Club, of our words being "disgusting, vile, and dangerous to not only our members but to this community" and turned the tables around saying that we shouldn't have commented without seeing the camera footage which they waited three days to release. The Locust Club demanded we be denounced and many local politicians obeyed. This was another demonstration of their control over local leaders and a warning to any who dare to criticize the actions of an RPD officer.

Due to the rise in youth violence and crime, the police have also used their platform to place the blame on Statewide policies such as Bail Reform. However, the arguments to reverse these historic policies are not supported by the data which shows a very low re-arrest rate for those awaiting trial and that a full one quarter of those ultimately had their charges dismissed.

Police have also used their platform to point the finger at Democratic elected officials. In August, Capt. Umbrino of the RPD effectively blamed me for violence in my neighborhood on a news broadcast about a murder investigation: "We're doing what we can do, obviously, with the resources we have. We utilized GIVE

funds and stuff like that to help put manpower and details in areas where we have problems. I know the Beechwood representation on City Council has voted against GIVE funds, DWI funds and they requested that none of that activity take place in their area. So we do what we can with what we're given and what we're directed to do."

The alarming implication is that if a lawmaker doesn't do what the RPD wants, they can face severe consequences and their community can be punished as a result. If leaders who have been elected to represent the community are extorted by the RPD in order to discourage attempts to hold them accountable, the community and democracy itself suffer.

Regardless of my vote, police funding has always been approved by the full Council. The Chief has since admitted that the prior GIVE model of an officer being paid overtime to sit in their car at hotspots was not effective. It is my job to question the use of funds, even when it is not the popular opinion. It's human nature to want to belong and fit in, but at this moment in history we have a moral imperative to challenge the status quo. Dr. Martin Luther King famously said, "The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people." I don't believe there are bad people governing the City of Rochester, just those good people who are afraid of the consequences of paying attention and speaking out against injustice and inequity.

Moreover, the prevailing model of relying on police to address a myriad of issues, often unrelated to criminal activity like mental health crises and homelessness, is outdated and counterproductive. It is a model rooted in a punitive approach rather than a preventive one. True community safety arises when trained professionals respond appropriately to various situations, ensuring a tailored and nuanced approach that respects the dignity and rights of all individuals involved.

We must consider alternative models that prioritize community well-being over punitive measures. A shift toward a more holistic and community-centered approach to public safety is not only essential but also in alignment with our democratic socialist principles. By investing in social programs, mental-health services, and community resources, we can address the root causes of issues and build a society where safety is a collective responsibility, not shouldered solely by law enforcement.

Furthermore, the current model of policing is intrinsically linked to broader issues of systemic inequality and social injustice. Communities that are disproportionately affected by police misconduct are often those already marginalized by economic disparities and historical injustices. We must confront these structural inequities head-on, recognizing that true democracy cannot thrive when certain segments of the population are systematically oppressed and denied their basic human rights.

We must prioritize upholding the principles of transparency, accountability and justice that are the cornerstones of a functioning democratic society. We must also strive for a paradigm shift in our approach to public safety — one that

LUPIEN, p. 12

Call for Submissions

In the spirit of encouraging lively conversation within the South Wedge and fostering discussion about vibrant topics relevant to the neighborhood and to readers of the newspaper, *The WEDGE* invites readers to consider submitting letters to the editor and/or to pitch ideas for lengthier potential opinion essays.

Letters intended for publication should be civil in tone, concise and to the point (250 words maximum), timely (referring to content previously printed in *The WEDGE*) and signed by the author (including contact information).

Longer, more in-depth opinion essays (generally up to around 500-750 words) should demonstrate the writer's expertise on a given topic; and, similar to letters, should get to the point and be civil in tone, timely (related to a subject in the news or raising a topic of relevance to the South Wedge neighborhood and its citizens) and signed by the author (including contact information).

Anonymous submissions (letters and essays) will not be considered for publication.

Contact Michael Saffran, editor, at msaffran@swpc.org.



Harry B. Bronson



**New York State Assembly
 138th District**

Working with you to
 make our community
 the best possible!

bronsonh@nyassembly.gov

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Perspectives



Sparklin' in the Wedge

Michele H. Martell
MHMartell@outlook.com

Readers Are Urged to Share Some Love This Sparkling Season

It is officially the sparkling season! In my mind, every season is a sparkling season, but look at your calendar — the season is officially upon us! It's time to deck the halls, put up the sparkling lights (if you haven't already) and revel in the celebrations of the season.

There is a feeling we can experience in our souls this time of year, a nostalgic feeling of precious memories, joy, gratitude, love and celebration of life. We may permeate this time with decorations, gifts, traditional and pleasurable activities. There can be a sense that we've waited all year for this beautiful period, where people may seem more joyful, even when dealing with the inclement weather that this season can bring.

Equally significant, it's important to be aware of our brothers and sisters who find this season not so joyful. This delighted feeling is not shared by all; some experience a deep sense of loss, grief, trauma, loneliness and need that are particularly activated this time of year.

I love the following long-ago, yet timeless, poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, which addresses both enjoyment and plight during this season:

Christmas Bells

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
1807-1882

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

(This poem is in the public domain.)

Longfellow speaks to joy and peace, while also the gloomy condition of many, due to war and unrest, racism, hatred, despair. How I do appreciate his conclusion that right will prevail. And his ending verse can prompt a stronger position of hope.

As much as we can love getting caught up in the sparkling season — as we should relish each season and what it brings us — there's the omnipresent awareness that there is so much around us that is not of happiness. We are bombarded with images of one war after another, viewing hideous atrocities being inflicted upon humans and animals. There is an ever-growing inclination to wonder just who and where is next. And with all of the progress we have made as a nation; racism, sexism, ageism, poverty, domestic and child and animal abuse are still rampant. It can feel overwhelming and despairing. To hear of "peace on earth, good-will to men" can seem daunting to ponder how that could happen. I will add my own addendum of "good-will to animals." Animals are God's innocent, sentient beings, with families and deserving of love and protection, who have been endowed to us to care for them.

How about starting in our own little corner of our worlds to share some of that good will? Each corner, each movement, creates a rippling effect to help others.

Here are a few ideas to inspire. Veterans, who have put their lives on the line so we may enjoy our esteemed liberty, are in need in many ways. Go to Veterans Outreach Center at vocroc.org to check out the biggest needs to serve those who serve U.S. The animals of our community are being abused and abandoned and need our support. Go to Verona Street Animal Society (vsas.org) to see how you can help the helpless and give voice to the voiceless. Willow Domestic Violence Center does an astonishing job of serving the families of our community; go to willowcenterny.org. And check out the YWCA at ywca.org Eliminating Racism, Empowering Women. To assist refugees who faithfully served us with their and their families' lives, go to KeepingOurPromise.org.

These are just a few resources that are helping to bring hope and good-will. There's a plethora of many other groups, depending upon your location and affiliation. Whichever community calls to your soul, please do something — whether it's volunteering, donating, mentoring, advocating or fostering — to share some love this sparkling season.

May this sparkling season bring some good-will, hope and peace. Wishing you and yours a beautiful holiday season and 2024. ▲

Michele H. Martell (MBA Walsh College, Rochester, Mich.) works at Veterans Outreach Center and is an independent consultant with Mary Kay Cosmetics. She volunteers at Rochester Animal Services and enjoys her kids, rescue dogs and everything that sparkles.



Malik Evans

Mayor of Rochester
info@cityofrochester.gov

Mayor Issues Statements on Cop-killer Conviction, Notable Passings

Oct. 13 Conviction of Kelvin Vickers:

"I am extremely grateful that justice was served today. While these verdicts will not bring back Rochester Police Officer Anthony Mazurkiewicz or take away the pain and suffering that his family endures, may these convictions bring a small measure of relief, comfort, and assurance that his life and service to this community was not in vain.

"This is a time to remember and honor the bravery, dedication and sacrifices that all our police officers make each day as they walk out the door to serve and protect our citizens. I would like to thank District Attorney Sandra Doorley, Police Chief David Smith, the men and women of the Rochester Police Department, and everyone who played a part in this trial.

"Let the healing begin for our city, and for all the families who were harmed by this individual who showed a depraved indifference to human life."

Oct. 27 Passing of Rev. Lewis Stewart

"I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Rev. Lewis W. Stewart Jr. Throughout his more than 40 years of ministry, community, and civil rights leadership, he believed strongly in the prophetic calling for social justice.

His commitment to the eradication of social, economic and racial inequities has made an everlasting impact. Rev. Stewart consistently expressed a strong ethical and spiritual commitment to strengthen the voices of the Black community and firmly stood up against injustices. The City of Rochester will be forever grateful for his exemplary actions and ministry and send our condolences to his family and the many lives he touched."

Oct. 28 Passing of AIDS Rochester founder Susan Cowell

"I join with the Rochester community in mourning the loss of Sue Cowell, a fearless giant and a progressive voice who moved the needle of public opinion toward acceptance on important issues like women's equality, LGBTQ rights and public health. A social-justice pioneer, Sue was recognized and awarded for her many efforts to build equality and justice. She leaves a shining legacy of advocacy and support of the cultivation of gay candidates and allies of the LGBTQ community, and for helping to make the city of Rochester one of the most LGBTQ-friendly communities in the country." ▲

Malik Evans, the 71st mayor Rochester, took office Jan. 1, 2022. He grew up in the South Wedge neighborhood.



Miguel Meléndez Jr.

Rochester City Council President
MiguelMelendez@cityofrochester.gov

City Council President Releases Statement on PAB Court Decision

Nov. 20 PAB Court Decision:

"First, the Rochester City Council sincerely thanks Andrew G. Celli Jr., Esq., and the staff of Emery Celli Abady Brinckerhoff Ward & Maazel LLP for their hard work and dedication to this case over the last several years.

"Today, the State of New York Court of Appeals issued a ruling, 4-3, upholding the previous decisions invalidating the Police Accountability Board's disciplinary powers.

"The Rochester City Council still believes that accountability of all public servants — including our police department — is of the utmost importance. This case was taken to the highest Court in the State, and this Council has now exhausted every effort to define the disciplinary powers of the Police Accountability Board. Now that we have been given the final determination, we must move forward with this very important work.

"In 2019, voters demonstrated their commitment to accountability, and by a 3 to 1 margin, Rochesterians voted in favor of the Police Accountability Board and sought to invest disciplinary powers within it. The former Council knew then, as we know now, that establishing such a board would be challenged by those who wish to maintain the status quo. This Council remains committed to accountability in our city, not just for our police department, but all agencies within City government." ▲

Miguel Melendez is a Rochester native and an East High School and St. John Fisher University graduate. He was elected City Council president in 2022 and chairs the Public Safety committee.

**THE WEDGE
GETS READ!**

Columns, essays and letters in The WEDGE do not reflect the views and/or opinions of the South Wedge Planning Committee.

ASYLUM SEEKERS (from p. 1)

officer, said the organization has helped new arrivals find housing and general stability.

“I think it’s been mostly positive,” Meléndez said of Rochester’s acceptance of asylum seekers. “These folks are really eager to contribute, eager to work and are looking for opportunities.”



Miguel Meléndez

Arranging busing or other transportation to take immigrant children to school has been a challenge, but they’re getting registered for Rochester City Schools or a charter school, Meléndez said.

Ibero has assisted adults with transportation to services it provides, including community-health worker training, digital-skills and

ESL classes and other events. The organization has also helped asylum seekers get clothing donations, Meléndez said.

“Rochester has a robust network of social-service agencies, but without knowing where these people come from or how and when they will arrive in our region, it is very hard to plan in advance for what, if any, government support will be appropriate,” UR’s Reichman cautioned.

While direct effects on people living in the South Wedge and other Rochester neighborhoods from the arrival of asylum seekers to Rochester would seem negligible, so far, the lives of those immigrants who came to the Flower City (many by way of New York City) are changed forever as they take refuge in an unfamiliar place — and soon, for many, experience their first western New York winter. ▲

▼Michael Saffran
msaffran@swpc.org

PUBLIC COMMENT (from p. 1)

There is much positive talk about affordable housing and increasing homeownership in this climate of bidding wars and out-of-area investors, but there is little in this new zoning code to support either, the South Wedge Planning Committee argues. It’s vital that city residents and businesses understand the effects of this new code.

According to a visual and researched survey of South Wedge residential properties, a majority are single- and two-family homes. The city has upzoned the South Wedge from R-2 to Medium Density Residential, which conceivably allows up to four units per qualified structure — in addition to the push to increase density along the main corridors.

South Wedge Planning Committee is already seeing landlords converting affordable units into market rate or luxury units because of the area’s desirability. One census tract, 32, is over 90 percent rental units. ZAP offers no encouragement for affordable or owner-occupied housing in the South Wedge.

Residents and business owners can read through “Comments” dated Nov. 1, 2023, at: swpc.org/city-zoning-alignment-project-zap. The history of the South Wedge Planning Committee’s ZAP comments and other helpful materials are also on this page.

The City of Rochester’s full ZAP website, with links to all materials and recorded meetings, is at RochesterZap.com. Public-information meetings were held in November. Comments will be accepted until Jan. 31, 2024. ▲

▼Glynis Valenti
gvalenti@swpc.org

HOUSING (from p. 9)

the highest populations in Rochester, a long history with the homeless and a high number of services are available: St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality (shelter), Veterans Outreach Center, St. Joseph’s Neighborhood Center (health), the former DePaul services on Mount Hope Avenue, housing agencies like PathStone and Landsman, East House and other recovery programs and homes. In 2016, there were 22 nonprofits in the South Wedge alone; plus, the Wedge has a reputation for being tolerant, diverse and welcoming.

Local businesses and individuals can be part of the successes, too. Home Leasing is in the final stages of a new supportive housing project in Marketview Heights; PCHO works with landlords to rent apartments for clients; and businesses hire clients through the organization. Plus, churches and groups can put together donations of hygiene, dental or first-aid kits; and Facebook users can host birthday fundraisers. For the holidays, More Fire Gallery created tree ornaments as a fundraiser for PCHO.

To learn more, go to PCHO.org or its Facebook page, or call 736-4663. ▲

▼Glynis Valenti
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LUPIEN (from p. 10)

values the inherent dignity of every individual, addresses the root causes of issues, and promotes a community-centered vision for the future. Only through collective action and a steadfast commitment to democratic principles can we hope to dismantle the pernicious threat of unchecked police power and build a society that truly serves the needs of all its citizens. ▲

Mary Lupien serves as vice president of Rochester City Council. First elected to City Council in

2019, Lupien is passionate about fighting poverty, institutional racism and climate change; and advocating for housing rights and improving the quality of life for all Rochesterians. She seeks to increase civic engagement by increasing transparency of the legislative process and to govern alongside the community.

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Somewhere in the Wedge:

Answer: The photo was taken in a yard off Nicholson Street. (Photo by Nancy O'Donnell Hale)

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