

Inside

From Campus to Coffee Shop: Education Serves

“Our language, our culture, and our tech—all these intersect in ways that speak to who we are and who we wanna be,” he explains.
Page 3



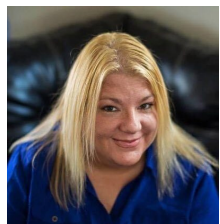
CLEVELAND OBSERVER

Since 2018

Vol. 6 Issue 1 January 2025

WWW.CLEOBSERVER.COM

Mayor Bibb Appoints Three New CMSD Board of Education Members



By Rosie Palfy



SCAN TO LISTEN



New CMSD Board of Education Member Pastor Ivory Jones III. Credit: City of Cleveland.

and community development. As a longtime district volunteer, she has served on numerous committees including the Superintendent’s Advisory Board, PTAs, School Community Councils, and the Bond Accountability Commission. Peak was selected to fill Heard’s vacant seat and will serve the unexpired term ending June 30, 2025.

Billups is a lifelong Cleveland resident and a John Marshall High School graduate. He has been a Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court employee for almost 15 years and works as the juvenile detention alternative initiative coordinator. Billups is “heavily engaged” with youth mental health programs and violence interruption work, according to the release. He will fill Hudnall’s vacant seat and finish the term on June 30, 2027.

Jones is a civic leader focused on social change and education. The Shaw High School graduate has been a Cleveland-area pastor for 32 years. He



New CMSD Board of Education Member Caroline Peak. Credit: City of Cleveland.

currently leads the congregation at Grace Missionary Baptist Church in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood. Jones will fill Link’s vacant seat, expiring on June 30, 2027.

All three new board members have children who currently attend or have previously attended CMSD schools.

CMSD has an unelected school board. Candidates are selected by an 11-member volunteer nominating panel and appointed by the mayor. The new appointees were chosen from a pool of 42 applicants.

As the school district’s governing body, the CMSD Board of Education is tasked with setting policy, approving the budget, and establishing district goals and accountability standards. The nine-member Board appoints the district’s chief executive officer with the mayor’s concurrence. The Board also promotes parent, family, and community involvement.

Bibb’s announcement



New CMSD Board of Education Member Jerry Billups. Credit: City of Cleveland.

follows the successful passage of a 10-year school district operating levy in November. Issue 49 was overwhelmingly approved by 66% of voters.

Peak and Billups were sworn in on Dec. 4 and made brief remarks following the ceremony.

Peak said there are “plenty of opportunities now” with artificial intelligence and new technology. But she believes in “going back to some of the basics” and “realizing that all of us learn in different ways. So there has to be multiple ways of educating, not only our children, but our communities.”

In the future, Billups said he sees CMSD schools being compared to the “best schools” in the state—both public and private. “I see us being at the top.”

Cleveland’s Core Four Arts Institutions Give Back to the Community



By Lisa O'Brien

Editor’s note: The Cleveland Observer presents an exploration of how Cleveland’s core four arts institutions—the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra, Playhouse Square, and the Rock Hall of Fame —impact and engage with our community. In this on-going series, Lisa O'Brien takes a closer look at how these organizations give back to the community.

The city of Cleveland has invested greatly in arts and cultural institutions, but how do these

institutions tangibly invest back into their communities?

In June 2024, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed House Bill 2, the 2025-2026 Capital Budget. The state invested over \$100 million in Ohio arts and cultural projects, including significant investments in Cleveland’s top cultural institutions.

Cleveland is an artistic and cultural epicenter in Ohio and the nation. Cleveland was ranked 12th in the country in the Arts Vibrancy Index for 2023, which, according to the report, “provides insight into which counties across the United States have the highest scores on three key measures: Arts Providers, Arts Dollars, and Government Support.”

In Cleveland, four major institutions comprise a large



Playhouse Square hosting community student activities. Credit: Playhouse Square website

portion of the economic and touristic impact: The Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall, Playhouse Square, The Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Public tax dollars fund these core institutions

through entities like the Cuyahoga Arts Council, statewide grants, and city funding, so these institutions have a responsibility to give back to the community as well.

Continued on page 2

Cleveland's Core Four Arts Institutions Give Back to the Community From front page

The Cleveland Orchestra

The Cleveland Orchestra is considered one of the "Big Five" American orchestras and is ranked highly in the nation and the world. Between their two main venues, Blossom Amphitheater and Severance Hall, the Cleveland Orchestra is responsible for adding more than \$135 million to the Northeast Ohio economy annually, according to their most recent 2019 economic impact study. As part of House Bill 2, Severance Hall received \$1 billion in funding.

The venues and orchestra are a large employment source and bring thousands of visitors to the Cleveland area every year. In their economic impact study, the Cleveland Orchestra revealed that 45% of their audience came from outside of the Cleveland area. But what is the orchestra doing to give back to its own community?

Like some other institutions on this list, the Cleveland Orchestra has a multifaceted education program including a free digital education series, youth ensembles for Northeast Ohio students, a free mindfulness activity designed to be implemented in Northeast Ohio schools, and student discounts to concerts.

For non-student residents, the Cleveland Orchestra has two major celebrations, the MLK Celebration Concert and the Hispanic Heritage Concert, which include free concerts, workshops, and tours for all Cleveland Residents. The orchestra also offers a young professionals program residents can take advantage of for a \$10 donation a month which gives them access

to exclusive networking and social events.

Playhouse Square

Playhouse Square is the second largest theater district in the nation and draws audiences from all over the state to see the various programming in the 11 performance spaces that make up the square. According to their 2019 Economic Impact Study, Playhouse Square had an estimated \$225.7 million contribution to the city's economy.

The state of Ohio has been investing more into this theatre hub, with Playhouse Square receiving \$1 million from HB 2 for the Transformational Greyhound Project. The city also recently held a new marquee ceremony and even the Cavaliers got new jerseys to honor Playhouse Square and its impact on the Cleveland community. With residents and the government pouring in their support, how does Playhouse Square give back to them?

In an email, Cindy Szymanski, communications director for Playhouse Square, shared how the organization contributes to the Cleveland community. When asked how Playhouse Square addresses barriers that may prevent residents from accessing the organization's resources she replied,

"We offer low individual and group ticket prices and bus subsidies for student matinee performances, and free programming annually on Family Theater Day in May. We offer The Reading Company, a free monthly program with free transportation for families residing in shelters. This includes a performance and books



Severance Hall home of the Cleveland Orchestra. Credit: The Cleveland Orchestra website

for the children to take with them. We work with Headstart programs as well," wrote Szymanski.

Playhouse Square works with underserved schools to start musical theater programs with their Disney Musicals in Schools initiatives. Szymanski explained that the organization also works to highlight BIPOC artists through a social justice performance series and investing "in the development of new work for young audiences by and about underrepresented communities including NORTH by Ashli St. Armant, Havana Hop by Paige Hernandez, and a series of social justice short films." Playhouse Square also named the historic black theater Karamu House as its first affiliate company.

Upcoming community programs include the introduction of neurological programming for those experiencing Parkinson's and their caregivers and an expansion of the Reading Company to partner with the Cleveland Public Library and feature more local artists.

What's in it For Me?

These arts institutions are not just tourist destinations but non-profit organizations meant to serve you, the residents. So, take advantage of these free programs or community partnerships. Continue to ask questions about how these institutions, largely funded by your tax dollars, can serve you best. Most importantly, be sure to get involved and enjoy all of the wonderful art and music that Cleveland has to offer, and stay tuned for next month's issue where that examines how The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Cleveland Museum of Art give back to the city of Cleveland



Cleveland Playhouse Square. Credit: Cleveland Playhouse

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CLEVELAND OBSERVER

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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of each writer, and not those of the publisher, editor or any other entity.

Article Submission Policy

The Cleveland Observer will consider article submissions electronically via email or through theclevelandobserver.com. Registration required. Submitter must provide name, e-mail address, and phone number with submission.

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From Campus to Coffee Shop: Education Serves



By Unity Powell

It's Saturday morning amidst the cozy, bustling atmosphere of UnBar Cafe, a coffee shop in the Larchmere community on Cleveland's east side. Adam Banks, PhD is throwing out Black music references, folded into his conversation.

Over the hum of espresso machines, blenders, and the door opening you hear topics that range from Black vernacular to digital literacy. For two hours, the space transforms into an intellectual haven or a third space, where discussions flourish and community thrives.

Banks, a professor of Education and African American Studies and faculty director at Stanford University has been offering community classes in tandem the courses he creates and teaches at the university. His classes are free and open to the public.

If you ask around, many people have known Banks peripherally, and describe him as unassuming. You can find him sitting in the back of UnBar with his computer out and focused. He'd look up, smile and speak, but once you get to know him, or see him in his element, he transforms.

Some patrons have likened him to a modern-day griot, a gifted and wise storyteller and keeper of culture. Sandra Bishop, a minister and yoga teacher has known Banks for 20 years and is honored to see him evolve, "To see him in his element, pulling everyone into the conversation, navigating topics with ease—it's amazing,"



Adam Banks, PhD of Education and African American Studies and faculty director at Stanford University has been offering community classes at the UnBar Cafe located at 12635 Larchmere Blvd, Cleveland, OH she says.

Banks' Stanford profile mentions how he's a crate digger and regarding his persona, "is a slow jam in a hip-hop world". He's like a DJ, skillfully keeping the morale of the party while introducing new voices, and giving the legends their flowers.

"You get to do whatever the hell you want to do—as long as you come back on the one." Banks grins, referencing his metaphor of funk music as a guiding philosophy for his work. What began as a simple idea to bridge academia and the community has blossomed into an essential ecosystem, bolstering a local Black-owned business and creating a unique third space where intellectual discourse meets economic support.

For Banks, who grew up on Cleveland's East Side and is a first-generation college graduate, this journey is about more than teaching. It's about transforming

the gap he calls the "town-gown divide"—the separation between higher education and the communities it often leaves behind. "I wanted to bring what we were doing on campus directly to people here. Education shouldn't just be for those who step foot on a campus," he reflects.

From the outset, Banks saw this project as a way to invest in Cleveland's Black community, not just intellectually but economically. "I wanted to be in a space that was ours and spend money with our folks," he explains. The impact has been palpable. UnBar's owner, Melissa, describes the shift: "These classes have been like a lifeline for the business, creating a cycle of support. There's an energy here that goes beyond Saturday mornings. People come for class but they stay for community."

Lady D, host of the podcast, "What's Going On With Lady D" realized that "she found her new home" when she recounts a story of her first visit to UnBar where a friend invited her to Banks' class, which starts at 1 p.m. on Saturday. She laughs discussing her daughter calling her throughout the day, shocked she was still there. "I did not leave UnBar until after 10 p.m."

Banks' philosophy for these classes is rooted in his own journey. Picture it, Banks as a toddler, leaving his home, crossing in the parking lot and ending up in the administration office of John Hay, the high school he would later attend, telling them he wanted to enroll in school. He laughs recalling this story his mom tells.

Banks excelled academically, buoyed by his parents' pride, the encouragement he received from his community, and his own intellectual curiosity. His teaching is informed by an understanding of what it means

to persevere and a commitment to offering others the opportunity to do the same.

Banks previously taught at Syracuse University, and University of Kentucky where he worked to create opportunities for connection outside traditional classroom settings. Whether hosting events, facilitating workshops, or creating spaces for dialogue, he wanted to ensure that education extended beyond the campus. Each session at UnBar is crafted to blend Black intellectual traditions with modern discourse, weaving in themes of technology, liberation, and community history.

He has taught the following courses at UnBar: Rhetoric and Black Digital Cultures: From BlackPlanet to AI; Star Trek Deep Space Nine and Afrofuturism; Parable of the Sower Reading Group; and Language and Literacy for Liberation.

"Our language, our culture, and our tech—all these intersect in ways that speak to who we are and who we wanna be," he explains. By connecting past traditions with contemporary media, Banks not only makes historical narratives relevant but also empowers participants to see their own creativity as a form of agency.

"It's Black up in here and that's why we like it," a patron says while walking out after class.

The space he's cultivating goes beyond the physical walls of UnBar. Each week, the group, comprised of community members, business owners, educators, and creatives, gather to connect, collaborate, and learn. Their shared experiences form a web of mutual support, where participants leave class with more than new knowledge. They walk away with new friends, business



Adam Banks, PhD is throwing out Black music references, folded into his conversation during a class discussion.

Continued on page 8

City Council Legislation Undergoes First Reading November -- December 2024



The Cleveland Observer is dedicated to keeping residents informed about legislative activities under review. By reporting on ordinances and resolutions during their initial stages, the Observer enables community members to engage with their Council members, providing feedback or expressing support before final decisions are made.

How Your Tax Dollars are Being Spent

The Cleveland City Council introduced a series of ordinances and resolutions during its meetings the last four weeks. These measures address a range of issues, including infrastructure improvements, public safety, community development, and economic growth. After their first readings, the legislation was referred to the appropriate city departments and committees for further scrutiny before advancing toward final passage.

The legislative process involves multiple steps to ensure transparency and accountability. Following the **first reading**, each ordinance or resolution undergoes detailed review by city departments and committees. This is followed by a second reading and additional discussion during the Council of the Whole meeting, where members debate and refine the proposals before a final vote.

Frist Reading November 22, 2024

Ordinance No. 1238-2024

Purpose: Amends the title of Ordinance No. 643-2024 and supplements it with new sections relating to designing, constructing, rehabilitating, and improving recreation facilities, parks, playgrounds, and similar structures on City-owned and leased properties.

Sponsors: Council Members Bishop and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified..

Ordinance No. 1239-2024

Purpose: Amends Ordinance No. 978-2022 to update the terms of a UDAG grant agreement with Team NEO, extending the period for Aer Lingus' direct flight service from Cleveland to Ireland from three years to four years.

Sponsors: Council Members McCormack, Hairston, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1240-2024

Purpose: Amends Ordinance No. 1153-2023 to update the grant agreement for the Northern Ohio Blanket Mill mixed-use neighborhood project in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood.

Sponsors: Council Members Santana, Hairston, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1241-2024

Purpose: Authorizes an amended lease agreement with I-X Center Corporation, extending the term for 49 years, adjusting the leased premises, and modifying other lease terms.

Sponsors: Council Members McCormack and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Rent adjustments based on fair market appraisal.

Ordinance No. 1242-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Safety to apply for and accept a \$16,500 grant from the Ohio Office of Criminal

Ordinance No. 1245-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Capital Projects to issue permits to the Cuyahoga County Department of Public Works for encroachments in public rights-of-way for a 10-foot-wide asphalt multi-purpose trail on East 156th Street and Shore Acres Drive.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1246-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Capital Projects to issue a permit to Fundamental Parking, LLC, to encroach into the public right-of-way of Scranton Road for the foundation and northern building wall of the Cleveland Clinic Global Peak Performance Center.

Sponsors: Council Members McCormack, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Sponsors: Council Members McCormack and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: \$45,000,000 from Fund No. 60 SF 004.

Ordinance No. 1251-2024

Purpose: Authorizes contracts with temporary employment agencies to provide seasonal personnel for various departments, including Parks and Recreation and Public Works.

Sponsors: Council Members Bishop and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1272-2024

Purpose: Amends the agreement under Ordinance No. 1250-2023 for the 2024 Cleveland Youth Diversion Program, extending the contract term and increasing the grant amount.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: \$127,500 total grant amount.

Ordinance No. 1273-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Economic Development to sign a petition supporting the continuation of the Downtown Cleveland Improvement District and requesting inclusion of City properties within the District.

Sponsors: Council Members McCormack, Hairston, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Estimated special assessments of \$3,738,149 to be paid from Fund No. 01-001-9998.

Ordinance No. 1274-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the design and installation of an on-site solar photovoltaic and battery energy storage-ready system at the Gunning Park Recreation Center, with Ameresco, Inc. contracted for design, installation, and maintenance.

Sponsors: Council Members Slife, Bishop, Kazy, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: To be paid from specified sustainability funds and project revenues.

Ordinance No. 1275-2024

Purpose: Authorizes a Job Creation Income Tax Incentive Agreement with Team Wendy, LLC, to provide financial assistance for creating 50 new full-time jobs at its facility on St. Clair Avenue.

Sponsors: Council Members Hairston and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Incentive based on 50% of income tax withholding revenue from new employees.

Ordinance No. 1276-2024

Purpose: Authorizes a grant agreement with The Merrick House to partially finance renovations to its security systems, kitchen,

Continued on page 5



Justice Services for the FY23 Recovery Ohio Law Enforcement Recruitment Program.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: \$16,500 grant.

Ordinance No. 1243-2024

Purpose: Approves the Tax Incentive Review Council's Year 2023 recommendations for property tax exemption agreements.

Sponsors: Council Members Hairston and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1244-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Community Development to enter into a development agreement with Ryte 2 Development Corp., LLC, for the sale and redevelopment of City-owned parcels on Superior Avenue near East 105th Street for the Glen H.A.V.E.N. development project.

Sponsors: Council Members Conwell, Hairston, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1247-2024

Purpose: Authorizes a permit for encroachments within public right-of-way, detailing responsibilities and indemnity for the permittee.

Sponsors: Not specified.

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1248-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Utilities to exercise the second option to renew a contract with Utility Solutions Partners, LLC for Oracle Customer Care and Billing managed services.

Sponsors: Council Members Kazy and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1249-2024

Purpose: Appropriates \$20,000,000 to the General Fund for additional resources.

Sponsors: Council Member Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: \$20,000,000 to the General Fund.

Ordinance No. 1250-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the design and construction of structures at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport to support operational needs during renovations.

City Council Legislation Undergoes First Reading November -- December 2024 From page 4

bathroom, and gymnasium wall to increase capacity for early childhood education and childcare programs.

Sponsors: Council Member McCormack.

Funding: \$150,000 grant to be paid from Fund No. 10 SF 400.

**Frist Reading
November 29, 2024**

Ordinance No. 1308-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Works to accept a donation of real estate located at 15891 East 159th Street from McDonald's Real Estate Company for use by the Department of Public Works.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Estimated value of the property is \$371,400.

departmental request).

Funding: Nominal consideration of one dollar and other costs related to the property acquisition and sale.

Ordinance No. 1312-2024

Purpose: Authorizes a non-competitive contract with Hach Company for calibration, maintenance, and certification services for water testing equipment for the Division of Water, Department of Public Utilities, for a two-year term.

Sponsors: Council Members Kazy and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: To be paid from future bond proceeds and appropriate accounts.

Ordinance No. 1313-2024

Purpose: Authorizes contracts with various agencies to provide MomsFirst services aimed at

departmental request).

Funding: Additional funding of \$125,000 from Metroparks and Council Member Hairston.

Ordinance No. 1321-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Finance, on behalf of the Office of Sustainability, to enter into an agreement with Johns Hopkins University to place three in-kind support staff members and funding to design, develop, and implement climate change and climate inequity solutions for three years.

Sponsors: Council Members Kazy and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: In-kind support and approximately \$120,000 for non-personal expenses, at no cost to the City.

Ordinance No. 1322-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the

departmental request).

Funding: Funded by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Ordinance No. 1325-2024

Purpose: Supplements the Codified Ordinances of Cleveland, Ohio, 1976, by enacting new Section 129.361 to allow agreements for shared use of the City's 800 MHz Radio System and charge fees for its usage.

Sponsors: Council Members Kazy and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Fees collected under this ordinance will fund system improvements and maintenance.

Ordinance No. 1326-2024

Purpose: Amends Section 2 of Ordinance No. 664-2022 to extend the term of the Cleveland Thrive Grant under the Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative by one year.

Sponsors: Council Member Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Up to \$2,000,000 from the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Ordinance No. 1327-2024

Purpose: Amends a grant agreement with the Cleveland Foundation to disburse \$325,000 in unspent funds to the Association of the African American Cultural Garden for donor engagement and phase two construction.

Sponsors: Council Members Conwell, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: \$325,000 in unspent grant funds.

Ordinance No. 1328-2024

Purpose: Authorizes a Joint Sponsorship Agreement with Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights for a grant application to fund a trail at Horseshoe Lake Park under the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program.

Sponsors: Council Members Bishop and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Not specified.

Ordinance No. 1329-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Works to employ consultants to manage City-

Continued on page 6



Cleveland City Council meeting of the whole passing legislation. Credit: Cleveland City Council Youtube video.

Ordinance No. 1309-2024

Purpose: Amends Section 2 of Ordinance No. 313-2024 to expand programs and increase funding for transforming recreation centers into trauma-informed neighborhood resource centers.

Sponsors: Council Members Santana, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Increased funding of \$236,121 for a total of \$1,613,711, paid from Fund No. 01-0114-6380.

Ordinance No. 1310-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Works to enter into a non-competitive contract with Excellance, Inc. for repair and maintenance services for an ambulance vehicle under warranty.

Sponsors: Council Members Santana, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Total cost of \$90,562.88, paid from Fund No. 70 SF 300.

Ordinance No. 1311-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the acquisition and re-conveyance of properties at 1200 West 76th Street from Shoreway Tower, LLC, to facilitate tax increment financing legislation for the Shoreway Tower Project.

Sponsors: Council Members Spencer, Hairston, and Griffin (by

reducing infant mortality and improving family health and wellness for one year.

Sponsors: Council Members Conwell and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: To be paid from Fund No. 01-5008-6380.

Ordinance No. 1314-2024

Purpose: Designates New Sardis Primitive Baptist Church (former Kinsman Jewish Center) as a Cleveland Landmark.

Sponsors: Council Member Jones.

Funding: Not applicable.

Ordinance No. 1315-2024

Purpose: Authorizes contracts with consultants to manage nuisance abatement for vacant and occupied structures in Cleveland for up to one year.

Sponsors: Council Members Bishop and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: To be paid from Fund No. 01-7001-6380.

Ordinance No. 1320-2024

Purpose: Amends Ordinance No. 531-2023, as amended, to include Metroparks in contracts for the Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS) project.

Sponsors: Council Members Hairston, Bishop, and Griffin (by

acquisition of property from Gustave R. Molnar at 1216 West 65th Street, consolidation with adjacent City-owned property, and re-conveyance to Molnar for future redevelopment.

Sponsors: Council Members Spencer, Bishop, Hairston, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Acquisition cost set at \$1.00; consolidated property appraised at \$65,000.

Ordinance No. 1323-2024

Purpose: Authorizes a joint use agreement with the Greek Garden Association of Cleveland Inc. to install a natural stone frieze at the Greek Cultural Garden and accept funding from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Sponsors: Council Members Conwell, Bishop, and Griffin (by

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City Council Legislation Undergoes First Reading November--December 2024

From page 5

owned Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and to charge fees for their use.

Sponsors: Council Members Kazy, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Fees collected will be deposited into Fund No. 10 SF 980 for maintenance, operational services, and expansion.

Ordinance No. 1334-2024

Purpose: Appropriates **\$5,370,000** in additional revenue to the General Fund (**\$5,000,000**), Internal Service Fund (**\$150,000**), and Small Enterprise Fund (**\$220,000**).

Sponsors: Council Member Griffin (by departmental request).

General Fund: **\$5,000,000** for Non-Departmental Transfers to Other Subfunds.

Internal Service Fund: **\$150,000** for Prescription Self Insurance expenses.

Small Enterprise Fund: **\$220,000** for Department of Public Works, specifically for Westside Market expenses.

Ordinance No. 1336-2024

Purpose: Appropriates and transfers funds within various City funds to support operational and personnel expenses. Total appropriations and transfers include:

General Fund: **\$11,927,000**

Special Revenue Fund: **\$3,415,000**

Major Enterprise Fund: **\$2,700,000**

Small Enterprise Fund: **\$75,000**

Internal Service Fund: **\$155,000**

Sponsors: Council Member Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding Details:

General Fund: Covers personnel and other expenses for multiple departments including Public Safety, Public Works, and Law.

Special Revenue Fund: Allocated for street-related personnel and expenses.

Major Enterprise Fund: Allocated for Cleveland Public Power personnel and expenses.

Small Enterprise Fund: Supports Public Auditorium personnel and expenses.

Internal Service Fund: Supports Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Storeroom expenses.

Frist Reading December 6, 2024

Ordinance No. 1349-2024

Purpose: Amends the title, the first, second, and third "whereas" clauses, and Section 1 of Ordinance No. 502-89 to designate the Former U.S. Coast Guard Station as a Cleveland Landmark.

Sponsors: Council Members Spencer and Hairston (by departmental request).

Funding: Not applicable.

Ordinance No. 1350-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Safety to apply for and accept a **\$630,689** grant from the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance for the FY 2024 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG): Local Solicitation. Also authorizes contracts with Cuyahoga County and the cities of Euclid, Parma, Cleveland Heights, East Cleveland, and Garfield Heights to implement the grant.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Grant amount of **\$630,689**.

Ordinance No. 1351-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Safety to apply for and accept a **\$67,822.66** grant from the Ohio Department of Public Safety for the FY 2025 Impaired Driving Enforcement Program (IDEP) and Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP).

Sponsors: Council Members

Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Grant amount of **\$67,822.66**.

Ordinance No. 1352-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Utilities to enter into a two-year, non-competitive contract with United Systems and Software, Inc. for remote endpoints and mounting kits for Itron mobile reader devices.

Sponsors: Council Members Kazy and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: To be charged against the proper appropriation accounts.

Ordinance No. 1353-2024

Purpose: Grants the City of Cleveland's consent to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to stabilize the foundation of Tower B of the Detroit-Superior Bridge (Veterans Memorial Bridge). Authorizes agreements to proceed with the project, which will be fully funded by ODOT.

Sponsors: Council Members McCormack, Bishop, and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Fully funded by ODOT.

Ordinance No. 1355-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Safety to apply for and accept a **\$136,875.79** grant from the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services for the FY 2023 Ohio Drug Law Enforcement Grant to support the Cartel Gang Narcotics and Laundering Task Force. Also authorizes agreements with regional entities to implement the grant.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Grant amount of **\$136,875.79**, with a required City match of **\$45,625.26** from Fund No. 01-6002-6397.

Ordinance No. 1356-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director

of Public Safety to apply for and accept a **\$60,000** grant from Cuyahoga County for the FY 2022 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Program. Funds will support the Division of Police and Bomb Squad, including the purchase of a response trailer.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Grant amount of **\$60,000**.

Ordinance No. 1357-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Directors of Public Safety and Law to apply for and accept multiple grants under the FY 2024 STOP Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) program. Grants will support a Cleveland Sexual Assault Advocate, law enforcement initiatives, and prosecution programs for domestic violence cases.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: Grant for Cleveland Sexual Assault Advocate: **\$46,931.54**, with a **\$15,643.85** City match.

Grant for Cleveland Domestic Violence Program - Law Enforcement: **\$114,901.34**, with a **\$38,300.45** City match.

Grant for Cleveland Domestic Violence Program - Prosecution: **\$183,637.32**, with a **\$61,212.44** City match.

Ordinance No. 1358-2024

Purpose: Authorizes the Director of Public Safety to exercise two-year renewal options for towing contracts with multiple vendors under Section 135.42 of the Codified Ordinances.

Sponsors: Council Members Polensek and Griffin (by departmental request).

Funding: To be charged against the proper appropriation accounts.

Opinion: Banning Books Threatens Our Freedom



Editor's note: The opinions expressed here are those of the author.

By Marissa Valentine

"Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech." - Benjamin Franklin

Knowledge is Power

What is a banned or challenged book, and why should you care? If you enjoy movies, TV shows, reading, games, or music,

the banning of books threatens the authorship and creativity behind the entertainment you love. Many beloved shows and movies, such as *The Notebook*, *The Color Purple*, *Outlander*, and *The Help*, were first books.

Reading books offers numerous benefits, from relieving stress and enhancing imagination to improving empathy, problem-solving, and communication skills. Research by the 95 Percent Group indicates reading can rewire neural pathways in our brains.

Yet, since 2020, the American Library Association (ALA) has seen a steady rise in books being challenged or banned. Such actions violate the First Amendment, censoring freedom of expression. Banned

books are often targeted for offensive language, religious viewpoints, or sexual content, leading to their removal from bookstores or schools.

Censorship often stems from discomfort with an author's ideas or perspectives. It perpetuates the status quo and suppresses diverse voices. Alarming, 44% of American adults do not read a book annually, and 45 million people are functionally illiterate, reading below a fifth-grade level, according to the National Literacy Institute. How can we justify challenging books that enhance our understanding of different cultures and experiences when so many already lack access to knowledge?

A History of Censorship

Book bans in the U.S. trace back to Puritanical roots. In 1637, the Puritan government banned Thomas Morton's *New English Canaan*, citing its criticism of their power structure, which ultimately led to Morton's exile.

Censorship has historically served those in power while oppressing marginalized groups. During slavery, enslaved people were prohibited from reading the Bible to prevent them from gaining inspiration for liberation. Today, the ALA's banned book lists often feature works by LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC authors, reflecting ongoing efforts to silence diverse voices.

"Every person has a right to

Continued on page 8

Rest Isn't Optional—It's the Foundation of Life



By Sharon Lewis, MEd, CFNC
Certified Functional Nutrition
Counselor

Functional nutrition is the individualized, holistic approach to diet, taking into consideration lifestyle factors, food choices, activity level, environment, and the presence of chronic disease.

People in today's society are overstimulated and burning the candle at both ends. It does not matter if you are the CEO of a major company, a parent with a 40-hour-per-week job, or an overscheduled teenager; people are bound to their responsibilities at home, school, and work. Picture a hamster running on a wheel. Is that you? The thing about the actual hamster is that when it gets tired, it will stop.

For some reason, humans push themselves to the point of exhaustion. People usually feel guilty about getting off the wheel, perhaps because of societal, cultural, or family pressures. Work ethic is another belief that derails our ability to rest. We falsely believe that we must always be in the process of being successful and getting ahead.

Rest Is Not Your Enemy

Some also view rest as a luxury, a selfish and unproductive act of self-indulgence. People sometimes set unrealistic goals for themselves and push themselves

to achieve those goals regardless of the effects on their health, well-being, and personal relationships.

Understand that rest and sleep are two different things. In addition to your sleep requirements—seven or more hours of sleep each night—you need to build time for rest.

Rest is essential and restorative and cannot be overlooked if your goal is long-term/sustainable activity, mental clarity, cognition, and good decision-making. Why It's Important to Allow Yourself to Rest. Ask any athlete excelling in their sport just how important it is to rest to train, recover, and play well. Let's look at some areas of life that



Intentional self-care. Credit: IvyPanda.com

are affected by lack of sleep.

Stress and Hormonal Balance

When stressed, your body sounds its alarm by producing too much of the hormone cortisol. This hormone controls many vital functions, including keeping inflammation down, regulating your blood pressure, and boosting your energy so that you can handle your stressors. But if the

switch is on too long, the system becomes imbalanced and can lead to depression, heart disease, headaches, and digestive issues. Rest decreases your stress levels and the harmful effects of too much cortisol in the body

Getting enough rest helps maintain hormonal balance, including the hormones related to hunger and appetite. Sleep deprivation and lack of rest can disrupt these hormones, leading to weight gain and other metabolic issues.

Energy Production

Rest provides a break for the cardiovascular system, which, in turn, helps maintain physical

stamina and endurance. During rest, the glycogen levels in the muscles are restored, giving you sufficient energy to do physical work.

Creativity and Problem Solving

Rest allows the brain to make new connections, leading to new insights. This aspect of rest can lead to greater creativity and improved problem-solving ability.

Who does not always want to be on top of their game?

Overall Well-Being

Sufficient rest contributes to a person's overall quality of life. Getting rest brings about feelings of recovery, restoration, healing, and better equippedness to handle life's challenges without feeling stressed.

What is Rest?

Rest is difficult to define because it is different for everyone. A broad definition of rest is "any behavior aimed at increasing physical or mental well-being." It can be any activity you enjoy, such as running, or a passive activity, such as meditation.

The current buzzword is "self-care." "Self-care can be defined as the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote and maintain their health, prevent disease, and cope with illness - with or without the support of a health or care worker," according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Whatever you call it, rest is an essential aspect of daily life. Make the time to take care of yourself.

From Campus to Coffee Shop: Education Serves

From page 3

contacts, and a reinvigorated commitment to each other. Banks reflected, "When we support each other, we grow together."

His classes have ignited a community-driven ecosystem that strengthens the social and intellectual fabric of Cleveland's Black community. Perhaps one of the most remarkable effects of these classes is their role in normalizing intellectualism within everyday community spaces.

Participants, some in their 20s and others in their 70s, (even some youngins join us 4-17), find themselves expanding their perspectives. "It's about creating a space where people can learn, talk, and feel welcome without having to prove anything," Banks said.

It's this embrace of the everyday intellect that has encouraged a diverse crowd to not only attend but to stay. Patrons echo sentiments of being able to have discussions on multiple levels even if you aren't familiar with the course topic.

His commitment to creating

a space that honors Black history, culture, and intellectual discourse has also deepened his own connection to Cleveland. Through the group, he's reimagined his role as both an educator and a community member.

"I think I'm a better writer and speaker because of us," he notes. "When you're part of a real community, your words come to life in a way that's hard to achieve alone." His goal is for these classes to inspire similar "third spaces" in other parts of the city. This initiative, as Banks describes it, is a "funk space" where everyone brings their own rhythm but finds harmony in a shared beat.

The classes are free and open to the public. Banks generosity and commitment to a welcoming space extends beyond the conversations. Attendees are provided free books and tasty treats, letting knowledge and nourishment go hand and hand.

As the session winds down, participants linger, chatting and laughing. They exchange ideas,

phone numbers, and plans for future collaborations and music recommendations. In a country where the Black community's stories and contributions are often overlooked, Banks' work is a reminder of the power of collective learning and cultural affirmation. Through his classes, he has built a thriving ecosystem of intellect, community, and economic support.

"We need to replicate this as much as possible," said Alan Turner, a high school language teacher.

As the doors of UnBar close on another Saturday morning, Banks' impact continues to resonate. Just like your favorite DJ, he's found a way to blend the conversation for everyone, introduce you to some new ideas, keep you on the flo' (engaged) and create a lasting experience. In this third space he has cultivated, community is finding not only its voice but also its rhythm, one conversation at a time.



Community classes at the UnBar Cafe located at 12635 Larchmere Blvd, Cleveland, OH

How One Woman Turned Her Setbacks into Success



By Sarai Murdock



SCAN TO LISTEN

Cleveland resident and community resource advocate, Odetta Fields, has dedicated her life to helping others avoid the mistakes she made. From her time



Odetta Fields. Photo Credit: Mark Silverberg

in prison to her role in establishing a resource center in Cleveland's Slavic Village neighborhood, Jordan's journey underscores the challenges faced by incarcerated women and the importance of second chances.

Born 1966, Fields was raised in Slavic Village. During her early adult years she dealt with domestic violence while taking care of her kids. She was determined to not allow her kids to be raised in a broken home.

"I ended up getting in trouble, I robbed banks and I went to prison. When I came home, I was back with him. My kids were 18 years old and I ended up back in trouble. I went back to prison and I decided that it was time to leave him."

A few years later Fields was in a bad car accident with a semi truck, causing the vehicle to hit a concrete wall three times. Her spine was broken and she was told she would never walk again. The truck driver who hit the car left.

"This other truck driver came and he held my hand and told me 'you're gonna be okay.' I thought I was dying. After the car accident, I wanted to find this truck driver who held my hand. Every witness said there was never a truck driver holding my hand. So I feel that there was something on that freeway and that I was here for a reason. The reason is to put my time and all my effort into this community. It kinda opened my eyes. So with everything that has happened in my life and what happened on the freeway that day, I've just turned my life around and decided this is what I'm doing."

Fields started out by helping people around her in the neighborhood. She helped people with their housing problems, giving them resources and even calling departments to come step in.

She found that some clubs/ programs were not effective and only made complaints about what was happening in the community. She wanted to create a club that did positive things and got things done.

Throughout her journey she made friends who were just as passionate as she was about making a difference and together they founded the Community Yahoos. Later on she was able to create the Southeast Cleveland Resource Center and a re-entry program for people who want a second chance in life.

Once or twice a month, Fields and her team go into prisons and talk to ex-offenders who come

to get help with housing and basic needs like employment and case management. Together they get to the root of the problem as to why the ex-offenders committed a crime to begin with. Through their program, one woman was able to receive resources like housing and hygiene products after coming off of the street, while a gentleman was able to turn himself in.

According to a 2021 report made by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Correction, 32.7% of released inmates are rearrested within a three-year span.

"I am determined to cut the recidivism rate in Cuyahoga



Odetta Fields a co founder of Community Yahoos. Credit: Mark Silverberg

county. Because if you cut the recidivism rate you cut the crime rate, you cut the crime rate you cut gun violence."

While Fields has been making a huge impact, activism wasn't an expected career. "I always said I would never be like my mother, I was never going to do what my mother did.. And I'm doing exactly what my mom did."

Her father was a chemist at Air Products and Chemicals, while her mother worked as an assistant director of University Settlement, temporarily running the hunger center, and was the director of Bishop Cosgrove, a hunger and day drop-in center for the hungry and unhoused people of Cleveland. She was

known as an activist who helped her neighborhood.

While Fields has now become secure in her role as an activist, supporting and empathizing for people through their struggles has always been in her nature. Growing up, Fields was very observant of the issues that people around her went through.

"When segregation started, I was in junior high. In high school, I had friends of color and I would have to drive them down Fleet Avenue because they couldn't walk down" she says. "The street that I'm on now, when I was young, the first black family moved on the street and that's when the house got blown up and the elderly black lady got killed." Seeing racial inequality from the outside looking in taught her to treat all people the same, regardless of their identity or background.

These organizations allow people to get help from others who have been in similar positions. Whether it's homelessness, assault, domestic violence, or incarceration, the community can rely on people that understand the struggle and want to help make those impacting changes to their life.

Through her work, Fields has been able to create a name for herself and improve her lifestyle. She is currently on track to obtaining her associates degree. Fields' goal is to remain in her city and continue improving her community through resources, support, and motivation.

"My community is my motivation," she says. "Everybody can change. You can't let your past keep you down."

Opinion: Banning Books Threatens Our Freedom

From page 6

read and to choose what they want to read," said Samantha Denbow, an ALA member. "It's a parent's responsibility to decide what their child reads, but not their right to dictate what's appropriate for someone else's child."

Protecting the Freedom to Read

"I believe censorship is the enemy of freedom," said Ava DuVernay, honorary chair of 2024 Banned Books Week. "By banning books, we deny ourselves the opportunity to learn from the past and envision a braver future."

In 2023, 4,240 unique book titles were targeted for censorship, a 65% increase from 2022, according to the ALA. Nearly half of these books highlighted LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC experiences. Public libraries faced a 92% rise in

challenges to titles, with more than 100 books contested across 17 states, including Ohio.

Will K-12 Education Be Affected?

Amid conversations about the state of education, Project 2025, a presidential transition plan, has drawn attention for its stance against teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT). While CRT has not been widely adopted in K-12 schools, its discussion has been used to justify the suppression of books addressing systemic racism.

CRT, defined by Oxford Dictionary as "a set of ideas holding that racial bias is inherent in many parts of Western society," challenges the ideals of colorblindness and equality under the law. Instead of addressing real issues, political rhetoric about CRT may distract from efforts to censor

diverse histories and stories.

The Freedom to Read

Literary works, including autobiographies, history books, and historical fiction, teach us to avoid repeating past atrocities while celebrating cultural differences. The ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom maintains a list of challenged books to ensure their preservation.

Circulating books about the lived experiences of Black Americans and other marginalized groups is vital. These stories highlight contributions to medicine, technology, and civil rights while shaping the world we see today.

Reading banned books is a personal journey into histories untaught in schools. These works offer perspectives that expand our understanding and

preserve the freedom to think, learn, and grow as a society.

