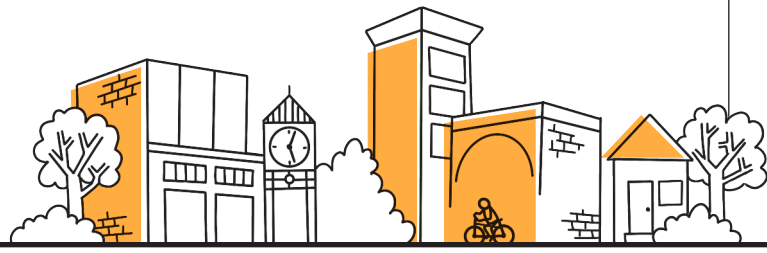


East Lansing Info

We bring East Lansing the news.



ELi Brings Voters Info on the 2021 East Lansing Council Election

VOTER GUIDE ON BACK PAGE

East Lansing voters will elect three people to the five-seat East Lansing City Council on Nov. 2, 2021. As we have done for the last seven years, East Lansing Info is providing nonpartisan information to help voters make informed decisions.

... learn more on PAGE 8

www.eastlansinginfo.news

Vol. 1 | Issue 6

In continuous operation since 2014

AUGUST 2021

ASK ELI TO INVESTIGATE

Your EL Infrastructure Questions Answered

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ANNUAL REPORT

Alice Dreger, publisher, reports on the state of the organization: "The mission of ELi is to provide nonpartisan, nonprofit, meaningful local news and information about East Lansing, Michigan. We take charitable donations from the community and engage a local team of citizen reporters in the process of bringing high-quality, accurate, and relevant reports of life in East Lansing."

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ELPS Archery Shoots for the Stars

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EAST LANSING INSIDER

Listen to the **East Lansing Insider** podcast, broadcast on The Impact (88.9FM) on Sunday mornings at 9 am.

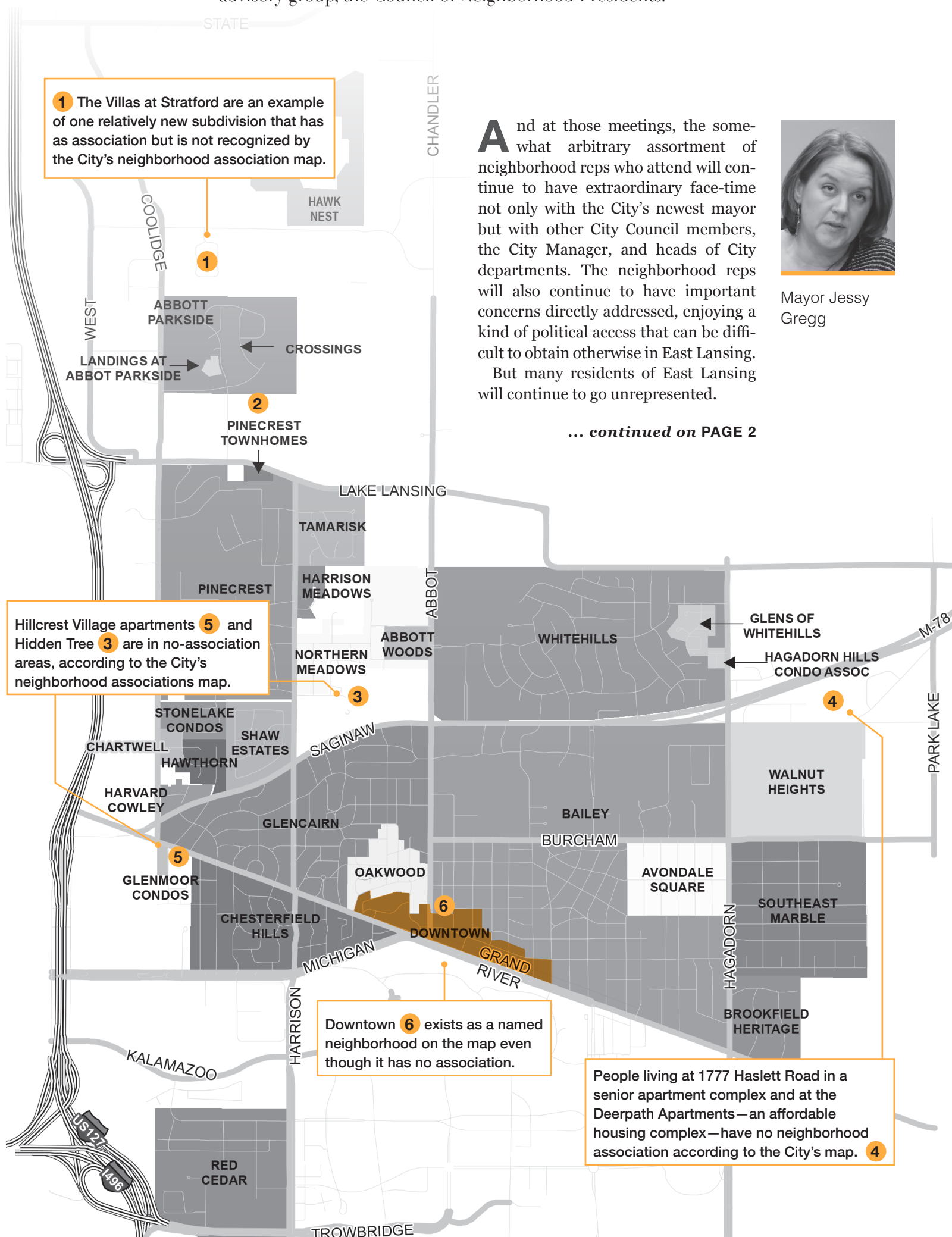
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NEWS ANALYSIS

Are You On or Off East Lansing's Political Power Grid?

BY ALICE DREGER | Publisher and Executive Director

Now that Jessie Gregg has become Mayor of East Lansing following the resignation of Aaron Stephens on Aug. 11, she has inherited the monthly meeting of a special advisory group, the Council of Neighborhood Presidents.



And at those meetings, the somewhat arbitrary assortment of neighborhood reps who attend will continue to have extraordinary face-time not only with the City's newest mayor but with other City Council members, the City Manager, and heads of City departments. The neighborhood reps will also continue to have important concerns directly addressed, enjoying a kind of political access that can be difficult to obtain otherwise in East Lansing. But many residents of East Lansing will continue to go unrepresented.

... continued on PAGE 2



Mayor Jessie Gregg

We bring East Lansing the news.

COVER STORY

(cont. from PAGE 1)

That’s because what is known as “the Council of Neighborhood Presidents” (CoNP) includes simply those who happen to know about the meetings and show up. Thousands of people in East Lansing have no “representatives” who attend. Many are not even aware of these meetings.

In fact, some residents of East Lansing live in areas that have no “neighborhood” recognized by the City, which raises the question of whether they even can be represented at these meetings. That includes, for example, the people who live in the affordable-housing complex called Deerpath Apartments, the senior apartments at 1777 Haslett Rd., Hillcrest Village (one block east of Frandor), and even the apartment complex where Mayor Stephens himself has lived, near the Lake Lansing Road Meijer.

Notably, the CoNP itself has no legal existence in the City.

CoNP is neither enacted by the City Charter nor by a City Ordinance. Under the “government” tab of the City’s website, unlike the official Boards and Commissions, you won’t find anything about CoNP. Nor will you find mention of CoNP at the East Lansing “Neighborhoods” page, maintained through the City.

Because the organization has no legal existence and does not formally advise Council, it is not subject to the Michigan Open Meetings Act. There are no public notices that the meetings will be happening. No minutes are produced, and no organized records are kept for easy public inspection.

The group has been meeting by Zoom during the pandemic, but the City has not openly listed the meetings or made recordings of the meetings available, as it has with the meetings of designated Boards and Commissions. People who know about the meeting just happen to have gotten on the right email list over the years.

Based on oral history, it appears that CoNP was created decades ago as a way for neighborhood leaders to engage, in an efficient forum, with the mayor of East Lansing.

ELi has been told that, originally, the group would meet without the mayor to set the agenda for when they would meet with the mayor.

But for at least the last decade, the mayor has been in control of the meetings. And, in that last decade, the forum has often been used for pushing out news about particular political agendas.

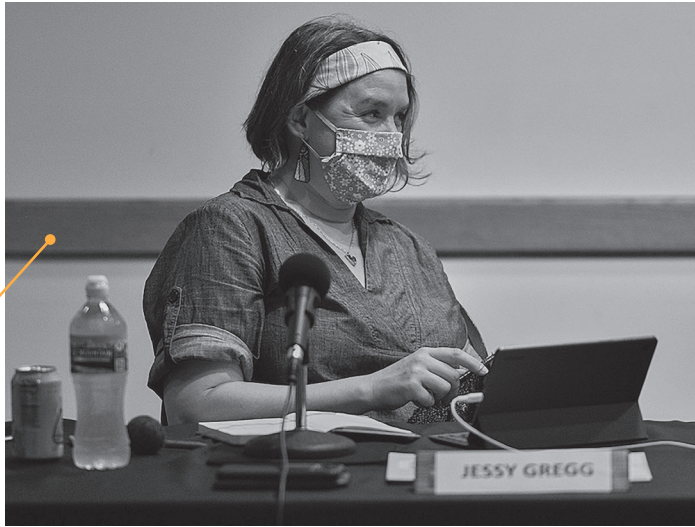
Some mayors have used the forum, for example, to introduce the neighborhood reps to members of Council running for reelection, giving those incumbent candidates a leg up others don’t have.

Far from being representative of the population of East Lansing as a whole, CoNP is made up almost entirely of white homeowners, most of them above age 50.

Politically-active neighborhoods with well-organized associations, like Bailey, have been quite consistently represented in CoNP discussions. Residents of Bailey are represented by people specifically elected by members of the neighborhood.

While some other East Lansing neighborhoods (particularly condo associations) have formal homeowner associations with legally-formalized organizing documents and elected reps, many “neighborhoods” in East Lansing have either no formalized system or a representative system that has faded. In both of those cases, they may go unrepresented at CoNP.

For example, while there are now thousands of people living in the neighborhood East Lansing has identified as “Downtown,” there is no organization for that population and no rep to CoNP. While Whitehills and Glencairn have had neighborhood associations, neither has had a representative come to CoNP for some time.



Aaron Stephens resigned from City Council to pursue a graduate degree, making Jessy Gregg the fourth mayor of East Lansing in less than two years. (Photo by Dylan Lees)

Meanwhile, some relatively small geographic areas with relatively few residents function as full-blown “neighborhoods” at CoNP. The Abbott Woods condo association has been represented at CoNP by ex-mayor Mark Meadows since a few months after his resignation. (At CoNP, with Stephens in the mayor chair, Meadows has weighed in on many issues, effectively maintaining a degree of open political power in East Lansing’s system.)

Whether the neighborhood “reps” to CoNP convey information and concerns back and forth from CoNP to their neighborhoods is a different issue entirely. Not all do, because not all have organized associations that reach residents.

What is clear is that it’s a lot easier to get the ear of the mayor (and a lot of other influential people) at a CoNP meeting than through, say, public comment at City Council, which limits one’s remarks to five minutes and at which the mayor feels no compunction to reply.

CoNP may be taking a “back to the future” approach soon.

During the period when Ruth Beier was mayor, just before Covid-19 reached East Lansing, a movement formed at CoNP to return to something like the original model – with the neighborhood reps functioning as the agenda-setters for meetings. Beier was supportive of that idea.

Since then, a small group of CoNP reps have been discussing development of a new approach. That group has included Raymond Vlasin of Harrison Meadows, Ruth Stump of Red Cedar, Barb McMillan of Chartwell Condominiums, Ralph Monsma of Pinecrest, and Anne Hill of Hawk Nest. (Disclosure: Vlasin is ELi’s Board Treasurer and Hill serves on our Community Advisory Board.)

To get data on residency, Hill has independently been tracking the public qualified voter rolls and property records of East Lansing and has confirmed that there are thousands of year-round East Lansing residents effectively unrepresented at CoNP.

Besides those already mentioned, there’s a swath of residences that include Hidden Tree and the complexes just east of there, north of Saginaw Street, between Harrison and Abbot Roads. Also missing representation at CoNP are relatively new subdivisions in the City’s Northern Tier, including Eagle Eye and Falcon Pointe.

CoNP has always been treated as an “open meeting” in practice; no one has been turned away from attending.

This means it is easy for a person who believes they represent a neighborhood to attend, participate, and convey information from the meeting.

In conjunction with this article, Hill told ELi that anyone who wants to be brought up to speed and connected to CoNP can contact her. You can be connected with her by contacting ELi. She has said she is also happy to help people learn what they’ve missed and to convey questions and concerns.

The next meeting of CoNP will be on Monday, Sept. 20, according to Emily Gordon, Assistant to City Council.

Because the organization has no legal existence and does not formally advise Council, it is not subject to the Michigan Open Meetings Act. There are no public notices that the meetings will be happening. No minutes are produced, and no organized records are kept for easy public inspection.

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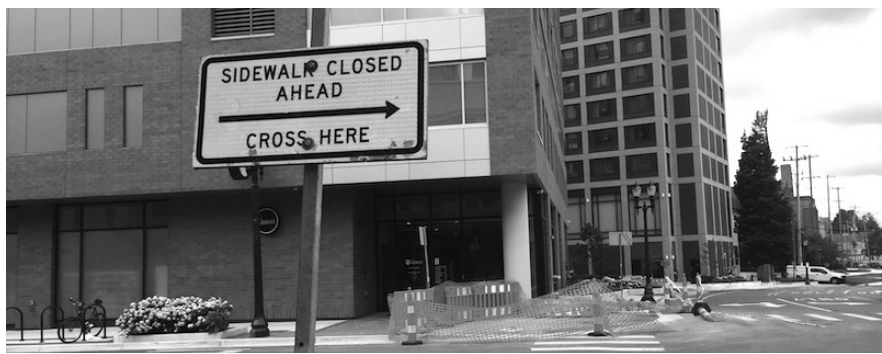
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Help ELi with a steady MONTHLY contribution or an electronic transfer

Go to eastlansinginfo.news/donate to see all of the ways you can donate, including MSUFCU Member2Member, Google and Apple Pay, and more!

You can also use your bank’s automatic bill-pay feature to send a check automatically every month to East Lansing Info, P.O. Box 115, East Lansing, MI, 48826-0115. This costs us nothing in fees.



Still missing: a walk sign where Abbot Road crosses Albert Ave.

ASK ELI TO INVESTIGATE

Your EL Infrastructure Questions Answered

BY EMILY JOAN ELLIOTT, *Managing Editor*
and ALICE DREGER, *Publisher and Executive Director*

Q: Love your Ask Eli segment, and I finally have one for you! The new Graduate and Abbott buildings look great and bring a lot to downtown, and [Albert EL] Fresco is really doing well. The last few times I've walked to downtown and back, I've had trouble crossing Abbot headed westbound from the south side of Albert (e.g. crossing Abbot from the tattoo shop in College Manor to The Abbot's northeast corner). There is no pedestrian signal there, and no pole or location for one to be installed. You can't read the signal on the north side of Albert from the south side, and even if you could, there is a protected left from Albert to Abbot (I think) to contend with. Google Street View shows there used to be one there, but it was removed when The Abbot was built. Did someone forget to put it into the design? It's strange to promote pedestrian use of downtown while removing important infrastructure for getting pedestrians into downtown.



A: That walk sign is finally being installed now, but it may take a while to become operational.

Back in February we reported on this issue under the headline "The Case of the Missing Walk Sign." We explained that the delay in installation at that time was caused by a tangle of issues, including emerging plans to construct the MSUFCU office building across Albert Avenue, just south of Dublin Square.

Prompted recently by the new reader question, we decided to check back in with East Lansing Deputy Director of Public Works Nicole McPherson, who let us know on July 23 that "The signal contractor is scheduled to start the installation of the infrastructure and foundations today. This will last a few weeks. Once the underground infrastructure is installed, the contractor will install the pedestrian signals and new traffic signals. This installation could be delayed as the delivery time for the material can be up to 12 weeks."

According to a follow-up from McPherson on July 26, "Submittals for the equipment were fully approved last week by the design firm which starts the ordering process. We are working with the contractor to prioritize the installation of the pedestrian signals. Material shortages may still impact this schedule."

As of now, both crosswalks across Abbot Road at Albert Avenue are closed. Pedestrians are expected to walk to Grand River Avenue to cross Abbot Road

Q: I remember you doing an article about the cell phone towers at the end of Kedzie. I see three towers going up now along nearby streets. Is that what the black metal structures are? How will they impact the local area?

A: ELi first found out about plans for a cell tower being erected near Kedzie St. and Grand River



2470 Burcham Dr., is operated by the East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority (ELMWSA).



A picture of a cell phone tower under construction. Photo contributed by an ELi Reader

Alley in November 2020 after a reader alerted us to a notice in Ingham County Legal News.

Now it seems that the tower is being built, along with several others. Here's what we found out from Nicole McPherson, Engineering Administrator for the City of East Lansing's Department of Public Works.

The structures are "pole[s] for small cell equipment" being installed by Verizon Wireless. They are sprouting up at the following intersections:

- Lexington Avenue at Old Canton Lane
- Gunson Street at Grand River Alley
- Kedzie Street at Grand River Alley
- Stoddard Avenue, north of Grand River Avenue
- Collingwood Drive at Grand River Alley

According to McPherson, all the poles are being installed in the City's right-of-way (which is public land) and not on private property. "The City doesn't have the [legal] ability to deny these installations, but is able to verify they comply with the regulations," wrote McPherson to ELi.

Q: The sewage treatment plant located on Burcham Drive east of Park Lake Road has had on-going digging for many months in a settlement pond. I am hoping ELi can find out the purpose of the construction and timetable for completion.

A: This is actually a drinking water (not sewage) project. It is aimed at lime removal from a pond that is used as part of the water treatment process.

The plant in question, located at 2470 Burcham Dr., is operated by the East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority (ELMWSA). That is the public authority that provides potable water to both East Lansing and Meridian Township.

Asked about what our reader was seeing, ELMWSA Manager Clyde Dugan first explained in an email to ELi, that ELMWSA pulls the water it treats "from 29 groundwater wells located throughout the service area. The groundwater is of very good quality, but does contain an objectionable amount of hardness."

That means it contains a lot of minerals. Dugan wants people to understand "that excess hardness is of no concern for public health protection, but water with this level of hardness is considered objectionable because it causes deposits on wetted surfaces like dishes, showers, etc. and will result in coarse-feeling clothes and excessive use of detergents."

So, the ELMWSA plant aims, in Dugan's words, "to remove a large portion of the natural hardness from this water source, producing a finished water quality that is acceptable to residents without needing an individual water softener in each home or business." And what our reader has been seeing is part of this softening process.

"As a result of the softening process, the excess hardness is removed from the water primarily in the form of calcium carbonate, otherwise known as residual lime. That is the white material that is collected in the lagoons at the water plant. Periodically, the lagoons are cleaned to remove this residual lime, and it is used as a soil amendment [fertilizer] on farmlands throughout central Michigan. One of the lagoons was cleaned last year and we noticed some repairs were needed to the bottom of the lagoon. That is the work going on now and will probably be done in a week or two. Following that, we will be removing some residual lime from another lagoon later this summer, which will also take two or three weeks."

We asked Dugan about the cost of this work, and he responded that, "The cost of residual lime removal is approximately \$300,000 per year. This cost is a normal operating expense for operating the water treatment plant and is included in the cost of water that is billed to each community."

NEWS BRIEFS

Poké Fresh Offers Healthy Hawaiian and Japanese Options

The downtown dining scene is continuing to grow with the latest opening of a new family-owned, fast-casual restaurant: Poké Fresh, at 551 E. Grand River Ave., near the Campbell's Market Basket. Co-owner Kylie Bachuwa explained to ELi's Sarah Spohn that the Hawaiian and Japanese eatery was established by her dad, Chris, who "has always been passionate about food, especially healthy food that makes you feel good. He was raised in an entrepreneurial family as his dad and uncles owned many grocery stores and convenience stores in the Detroit area." The shop offers sushi-grade, tuna and salmon as well as cooked proteins: chicken, shrimp, tempura shrimp and a variety of tofu.

"We also have lots of toppings (fruits, veggies, and garnishes) and homemade sauces to choose from," Bachuwa said. "We have tons of options to accommodate dietary restrictions including gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, and vegan."



READ MORE

Scan with your smartphone camera for more about this story.

A Tale of Two Houses

Two student-rental houses in the Bailey neighborhood faced similar citations from the City of East Lansing — for noise, litter, and public health violations — but the outcomes turned out differently, as Andrew Graham reported for ELi. East Lansing's Housing Commission considered the differing circumstances. In the case of 403 Ann St., the vote went 4-2 against sanctions, as landlord CRMC explained they had evicted the problem tenants. "We don't want this reputation," said a CRMC rep. But the license of fraternity Pi Kappa Alpha at 301 Charles St. was sanctioned in a 5-1 vote. On the whole, commissioners were unpersuaded that last year's behavior at the frat represented an outlier year. One more citation for party litter or noise will bring that frat's license back before the commission.



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Scan with your smartphone camera for more about this story.

SPEND LOCALLY

Pinecrest School Will Be Renamed

The East Lansing School Board voted unanimously on Aug. 9 to rename Pinecrest Elementary School to Dr. Robert L. Green Elementary School to honor the person believed to be the first Black man to purchase a house in East Lansing, in 1964, and known to be a national leader in civil rights. In attendance at the vote was Green's eldest son, Vince Green, who spoke positively about his own experiences in East Lansing Public Schools, noting that by attending these schools, he had access to far more opportunities than many Black American children of his generation. A celebration is likely to occur in September.



READ MORE

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Annual Report

EXPENSES: \$176,250

INCOME: \$157,496

6
issues of East Lansing Info newspaper



25+
episodes of the East Lansing Insider podcast

3 YEARS
receiving the maximum amount for the NewsMatch Grant

704
donors supporting ELi's work in the last fiscal year

Join the Effort to Bring East Lansing The News

ELi Staff Report

EAST LANSING — We need your help. We don't know how to solve the national problem of the spreading of misinformation and disinformation. But we know how to protect our community: by making sure we have a factual, dedicated, local news source that ferrets out the truth and brings it in a way that is trustworthy, steady, and clear.

So many communities are suffering from a lack of anything like an ELi. We are fortunate here, but ELi runs almost entirely on local donations.

ELi works something like an old-fashioned water brigade: The people who fundraise for ELi work to "fill the ELi water tower" with donations from our community in order to have resources available so that together we can address news "fires" around town.

Because our fundraising cycle starts on Nov. 1, we are at the yearly low-point of our savings. Right now, we have about \$50,000 in the metaphorical water tower.

This is where you come in: you can help us by donating right now to keep our public service liquid!

And later, you can help us come Nov. 1 by being a "bucket captain" and fundraising with us.

We have buckets for parks & trails reporting, and for donations to support investigative news, and you could have a bucket for your neighborhood.

If you give what you can, the ELi team will give you our all. We will keep reporting on City finances, development, East Lansing Public Schools, local businesses, our environment, and the arts. We will get your questions answered and report important decisions. We will keep bringing this community together!

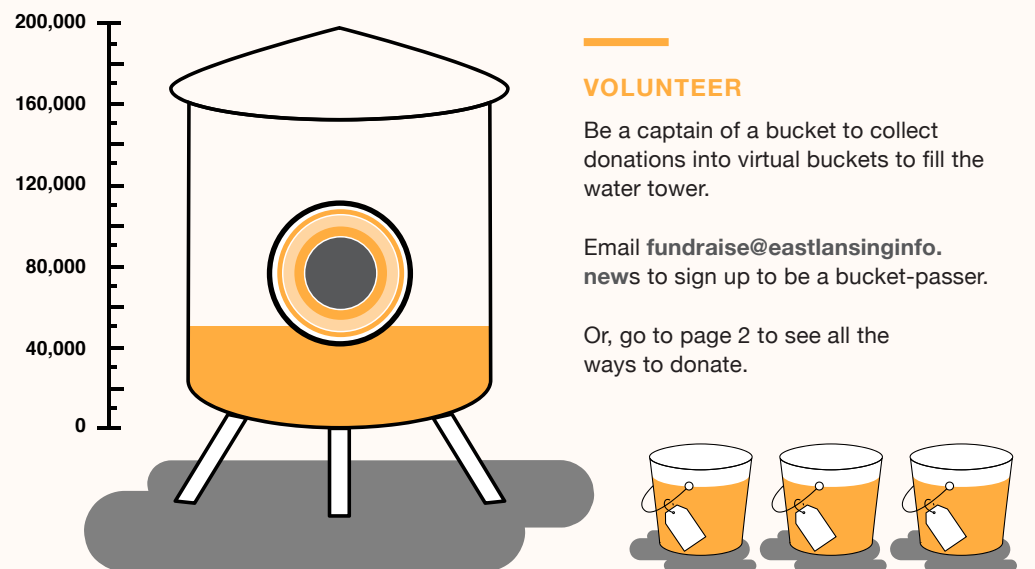


Member of the Institute for Nonprofit News since 2018

28
students have been educated through our Summer Youth Journalism Program

501(c)(3)
non-profit status

ELi is a non-profit, citizen-run, nonpartisan, local news cooperative of the people, by the people, and for the people of East Lansing, Michigan. We run on our readers' financial support, and we are recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit by the IRS, which means that financial contributions to ELi are tax-deductible.



What we do

We are the only news organization that brings you regular coverage of East Lansing's City Council, Planning Commission, School Board, and Downtown Development Authority.

We are the only news organization that does consistent investigative reporting on East Lansing. We also work to bring good news of our people, our schools, our businesses, our art, and our parks and trails. We care so deeply about this community, and we appreciate that you support this work.



LOCAL ONLINE COVERAGE

Our main categories of reporting include city government, schools, the Downtown Development Authority, zoning and development, arts and cultures, public safety including ELPD, taxes and City finances, and Parks & Rec.

In the last year, we had a record number of readers send in "Ask ELi to Investigate" questions. Other series include "Spend Locally" which showcases local businesses, and "Little Local Joys," to highlight some good news.



INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

We conduct investigative reporting like no other news organization in EL, covering downtown development disputes; policing; environmental and health concerns; and local elections.

In the last year, we had a highly skilled team contributing to investigative reporting, including Emily Joan Elliott, Andrew Graham, Heather Brothers, and Nathan Andrus.



EAST LANSING INSIDER PODCAST

A weekly podcast from ELi talks to a range of guests about current happenings in the city.

The East Lansing Insider podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and broadcast on The Impact (88.9FM) on Sunday mornings at 9 am.

eastlansinginfo.news/category/podcast



STUDENT JOURNALISM PROGRAM

Our yearly, 2-week Summer Youth Journalism Program is open to those age 15-22 who are residents of the greater East Lansing area and contributes to both news production and the promotion of media literacy.

Program Director Cody Harrell has been at the heart of the program's success.



EAST LANSING INFO NEWSPAPER

The new East Lansing Info newspaper puts the most important stories of each month into print for readers in our community.

This allows ELi to reach a wider and more diverse audience, including people in senior housing facilities and people with lower incomes.

89%
went to paying people
to bring ELi's news

PAYROLL (incl. taxes) | \$156,776

DONATIONS | \$142,481

NEWSMATCH GRANT | \$15,000

* Interest Income | \$14

Postage & supplies | \$4,490

Advertising/promotion | \$5,305

Reporting Expenses | \$1,577

Credit card processing fees | \$1,253

Accounting & Legal Services | \$4,855

Prof. membership/educ. | \$512
Computer/internet | \$1,482

NOTES ON EXPENSES: The category of "Reporting Expenses" includes things like Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) charges billed to us by the City of East Lansing and mileage reimbursement if reporters have to travel more than five miles. The category of "Professional Membership and Continuing Education" includes our dues to the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN – our access to NewsMatch) and the Local Independent Online Publishers (LION) association. INN and LION support us with resources, networks, and training.

Letter from the Publisher

ELi's Income and Expenses in the Last Fiscal Year



ALICE DREGER
Publisher and Executive Director

Alice reports chiefly on city government for ELi and also serves as ELi's lead investigative reporter. Her national bylines include the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *WIRED Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*.

The mission of East Lansing Info (ELi) is to provide nonpartisan, nonprofit, meaningful local news and information about East Lansing, Michigan. We take charitable donations from the community and engage a local team of citizen reporters in the process of bringing high-quality, accurate, and relevant reports of life in East Lansing.

And we do it in an extremely cost-conscious manner in order to make sure this system is sustainable. With your help, we've created a news organization that, for seven years, has brought a whole city's worth of news to our community. We started out on a tiny budget to see if we could make this work, and ramped it up carefully. Today, we continue to operate on less than \$200,000 per year. (You heard that right!)

Keeping expenses low and quality high is ELi's formula for making sure the people of East Lansing have a nonprofit news organization that is here to serve them.

We are the only news organization that brings you regular coverage of East Lansing's City Council, Planning Commission, School Board, and Downtown Development Authority. We are the only news organization that does consistent investigative reporting on East Lansing. We also work to bring good news of our people, our schools, our businesses, our art, and our parks and trails. We care so deeply about this community, and we appreciate that you support this work.

As ELi's Executive Director and Publisher, today I'm bringing you a look at ELi's income and expenses for our last fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. Ordinarily, we bring you just calendar-year Annual Reports, but ELi Managing Editor Emily Joan Elliott and I decided it was a good idea to bring a Fiscal Year report as we hopefully are beginning to emerge from the significant Covid-19 economic disruption in East Lansing.

What was ELi's income in our last fiscal year?

ELi is a registered 501c3 nonprofit, which means donations to us are tax deductible to the fullest extent the law allows, and from July 2020 through June 2021, ELi's income totaled \$157,495. This included \$142,481 in donations from readers, \$15,000 from the NewsMatch grant system that we access through the Institute for Nonprofit News, plus \$14 in interest income.

In other words, about 90% of our financial support comes from local readers like you! We have tried to obtain national grants, but the few

national foundations that support hyperlocal news do not see East Lansing as a "high need" news area. Fortunately, we don't have an exceptional amount of violent crime; we don't have a lot of political scandals; we have a relatively stable economy and a relatively educated populace. That's why we have to rely on local donated dollars – although we are also glad to do so, because doing so keeps us literally accountable to our own community.

Our General Manager Jodi Spicer, who keeps our books for us, ran the numbers and found that we had a total of 704 "unique donors" contribute to us during our last fiscal year. (That includes several dozen couples and families who count as one "unique donor" each in our books.) Because many signed up to support us through an automated monthly contribution, together those 704 donors made a total of 2,307 unique donations.

That's an amazing number when we compare our stats to other local nonprofit news organizations, and I believe it is the result of the ELi team doing excellent work for so many years. It also helps that we have a populace that understands the true value of honest news – news that is here as a public service, not for a profitable, "click-bait" approach.

What were ELi's expenses in our last fiscal year?

From July 2020 through June 2021, ELi's expenses totaled \$176,250. That puts our expenses up about 18% over the prior fiscal year, and the chief reason for that is that we are paying more people – including Emily and Jodi – to do editing, bookkeeping, and management work that I used to do as an unpaid volunteer. (Frankly, they do it better than I did!)

The start of ELi's new monthly paper edition also increased costs over the last fiscal year, as the paper edition means we pay for more service from excellent local designer Cait Palmiter and BRD Printing in Lansing. But the paper edition has also extended our reach dramatically, which

is not only helping us to meet our service mission but is also bringing in new donors to ELi. The paper edition appears to be on track to be a net-gain financially for ELi.

Our goal is to always keep expenses low while also making sure the maximum amount possible in our expenditures stays in the local economy, doing more local good.

In our last fiscal year, about 89% of ELi's expenditures (your donations) went to pay local people to bring the news. If we add into that what we paid for local accounting and legal help, that number rises to 92%.

I am excited to report that the amount we paid in credit card processing fees this last fiscal year compared to the year before went down by almost 50%, saving us about \$1,200! The reason for this is that two new systems slashed the donation-fee costs, and our donors have taken advantage of these two systems. First, MSUFCU's new "Member2Member" service allows electronic transfers from members to us at no cost. Second, ELi's adoption of the e-payment service Omella is also allowing donations to us at no cost, including via Apple Pay and Google Pay.

“Our goal is to always keep expenses low while also making sure the maximum amount possible in our expenditures stays in the local economy, doing more local good.”

ALICE DREGER
Publisher and Executive Director

What do I see coming in the next year?

For one thing, I see our team having to do more fundraising, because in the last fiscal year we had to dip into savings to the tune of \$18,755. (At the end of the fiscal year, we had \$54,625.47 in the bank.) But I also see the hope of more people stepping up to support this work as they recognize the value of ELi to the community.

And I see a fantastic team that will keep bringing the news. That is going to include our critical reporting on the City Council race this November, a big investigation of the use of Tax Increment Financing in the City, reporting on the return to in-person education at MSU and its impacts on East Lansing, coverage of what's happening in our public schools, and so much more.

But remember: we can't do this without generous financial support. You can help us do this if you make a tax deductible contribution today.

And if you have questions, concerns, or news needs, don't ever hesitate to contact us. Thanks to the generous people who support us, we are still here working to serve this community.

639
original reports about what's happening in East Lansing were brought to you by

28
local reporters and photographers

Who we are
Twenty-eight local people contributed reporting, including Nathan Andrus, Aaron Appelbey, Patty Bonito, Heather Brothers, Gary Caldwell (photojournalism), Claire Chapin, Alice Dreger, Emily Joan Elliott, Andrew Graham, Chris Gray, Jack Timothy Harrison, Alex Hosey, Ann Kammerer, Amalia Medina, Mark Meyer, Ann Nichols, Brooklyn Peppo, Adan Tomas Quan, Anais Rios-Kasoga, Chris Root, Natalie Rose, Carrie Sampson, Elke Schrenke, Nick Sly, Ken Sperber, Sarah Spohn, Sophia Strasburg, and Christopher Wardell.



Help ELi grow local coverage of ELHS sports

With the return of high school athletics imminent, ELi has launched a sports fundraising GoFundMe campaign with the goal of raising \$15,000 for our sports budget by August 26 — the beginning of the high school sports calendar, marked by the football season opener.



DONATE TODAY

Scan the QR code above to visit the GoFundMe for ELi Sports coverage.



Pierre Butler and Mayan Mayan running for the ELHS boys track team.

Photo by Gary Caldwell for ELi.

Amid a year of high school sports unlike any other, with altered schedules and empty(ish) arenas due to Covid-19, one thing remained constant: East Lansing High School sports excelled. From the football team making a regional playoff game to both the girls and boys track teams sending a bevy of runners to states and everything in between, the Trojans found ways to thrive in a year of uncertainty and changing protocols due to the pandemic. And it made what the Trojans achieved in 2020-21 that much more impressive — through all the ups and downs, starts and stops and roadblocks — everyone persevered to make it as memorable a year as any.

HERE'S A LOOK BACK AT WHAT THE TROJANS ACHIEVED DURING THE 2020-21 SEASONS.

BY ANDREW GRAHAM
Reporter + Sports Editor

Fall 2020

Headlining the fall slate of sports for East Lansing was the football team.

With two NCAA Division I commits in offensive tackle Ethan Boyd and wideout Andre Anthony Jr, both seniors, the Trojans romped through the regular season and through the early rounds of the state playoffs — after a Covid pause in the middle that meant the Fall 2020 season actually ended in 2021.

In districts, they bashed Portage Central, 49-6, then bulldozed Portage Northern, 42-14, setting up a regional matchup with Muskegon Mona Shores, played at Lynn C. Adams Stadium in front of East Lansing High School.

They also took a social stand, when the team decided themselves to take a knee during the national anthem.

After breaking out to an early lead against Mona Shores, the Trojans fell behind and couldn't pull off a comeback, losing 24-21 to the eventual state champion.

"I'm not smart enough to tell you what points in your lives that this experience, this year, is going to make you stronger and move forward when adversity hits...From the bottom of my heart, it was an honor to be associated with all of you," football Head Coach Bill Feraco told his team on the field after their final game.

Along with the football team, the boys tennis team toppled Dexter for the district championship before losing at states. The girls golf team finished fourth in the region, just seven strokes short of finishing third and qualifying for states.

The boys soccer team reached district semifinals with a 3-0 win against Swartz Creek before getting pipped by Grand Blanc, 2-1. The volleyball team faced Grand Ledge in the district quarterfinal, falling 3-0.

Along with the teams, several individuals stood out in the fall, too.

Sophomore diver Gwen Petrie finished 10th in the state, one year after placing 18th as a

freshman. She improved during the pandemic by using her trampoline at home among other things.

And on the cross country course, Abbie Draheim and Nathan Faust placed well at the state meet. Draheim finished 11th overall in the state (out of 246 runners who competed), and Faust finished 27th (out of 250 runners).

Winter 2021

The main feature in the winter was the parallel runs the boys and girls basketball teams made through the state tournament. Both teams reached the state quarterfinals before they were beaten in postseason play.

The path to states for the girls started with district wins against DeWitt and then Haslett before they moved on to regional finals via a forfeit by their regional semifinal opponent. In the regional final, with a spot in states on the line, the Trojans dominated Kalamazoo Central, 62-38.

The boys rattled off three-straight victories to win their district, beating St. Johns, outlasting DeWitt in overtime, and finishing the deal against host school Waverly. At regionals, the Trojans topped Holt, then outdueled Coldwater to win a regional crown and join the girls in state quarterfinals.

"We talked a lot this year about doing it for last year's team, and doing it for ourselves because we didn't get to finish out our season last year," senior Annelise Lebeda said about the run to states after beating Kalamazoo Central.

In state quarterfinals, the girls lost to Hudsonville, and the boys were beaten by Grand Rapids Forest Hills Northern.

Besides the runs from the hoops teams, the boys swim and dive team shone in 2021. They finished second in the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC) blue division, beating out rival Okemos for that spot.

"We lost to them during the regular season and then beat them at the championship meet," swim and dive Head Coach Madi Zink said about Okemos. "It was nice to come back and to be able to do that."

Further, two individuals for the boys — senior swimmer Josh Bergdolt and freshman diver JJ Van Dyke — made it to the state meet.

The girls gymnastics team placed seventh at regionals, and the boys and girls bowling teams finished 14th and 11th at their regionals, respectively.

And one wrestler — junior Emilio Cabrera — returned to state finals after making it his freshman year: a dose of redemption after missing out his sophomore season.

Spring 2021

It was a strong finish to a strong year for East



The bench of the ELHS girls basketball team cheered their teammates on.

Photo by Gary Caldwell for ELi.



The ELHS baseball team waits to bat.

Photo courtesy of George Mieng.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Stay up to date with East Lansing events online at eastlansinginfo.news/community-calendar



SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Regional Title Highlights a Dominant Season For the East Lansing Girls Track and Field Team

On top of the team title at regionals, seven runners on the East Lansing girls track team qualified for the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Division 1 state meet. And locally, the Trojans — with more runners than they sent to regionals — have dominated. They won the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC) Blue Division meet and placed a bevy of runners in the Greater Lansing Honor Roll meet.

... read more Sports on www.eastlansinginfo.news

7

Lansing. The boys and girls track teams dominated the local competition, winning their respective CAAC meets by a comfortable margin, before sending a group of runners to states.

At the state finals, the boys snagged five points overall, with the 4x200 relay team of Dorijan Jackson, Conner Long, Pierre Butler, and Alex Hosey finishing fourth overall.

The girls did even better as a team at states, snagging 19 points to finish ninth overall. Senior sprinter Comari Hawkins was third fastest in the state in the 100 meters with a time of 12.10, finishing .01 of a second behind the second-place finisher. And in the 1,600 meter, Draheim finished seventh, and sophomore teammate Anna Delgado finished 10th.

Also making their state finals was freshman golfer Drew Miller, who placed 22nd in the state.

The boys lacrosse team made a regional final game for the first time in more than a decade to cap off a renaissance of a season. They lost to the defending state champions, but found value even in that loss.

“To have the opportunity to play against the defending state champions and to see what that level of lacrosse is like, especially for our team, because we’re still a relatively young team right now — that was just great for our guys,” boys lacrosse Head Coach Will Wismer said.

The girls lacrosse team nearly matched them — and dominated some CAAC competition along the way — but fell in the regional semifinal to eventual regional champion DeWitt.

The girls tennis team had one of their best seasons this century, winning the CAAC blue division for the first time since their coach was a high schooler playing on the team. They finished second at regionals and sent several doubles pairings plus some singles players to states.

“We saw that we definitely had a lot of potential as a team to do something special this year,” Head Coach Cosette Buckberry said. “And then we went on to win the CAAC (Blue) itself.”

In girls soccer, the Trojans made some progress this year despite a roster reset — picking up their first tie against Okemos in years. They fell to host Hartland in district quarterfinals.

And on the diamonds, the baseball and softball teams both fell in close, competitive fashion in their districts. The softball team lost a heart-breaking district semifinal to host DeWitt in extra innings, 5-4. That game took 14 innings — usually high school games are seven innings.

The baseball team was topped by powerhouse Grand Ledge, 5-1, but made the Diamond Classic — a local invitational tournament — where they topped St. Johns before losing a pitchers duel, 1-0, to eventual runner-up DeWitt.

“It’s a lot more than just that last game,” baseball Head Coach Mark Pendred said. “It’s the whole four years of being together and doing things together as a team.”



The ELHS girls tennis team.

Photo courtesy of Cosette Buckberry.

“We talked a lot this year about doing it for last year’s team, and doing it for ourselves because we didn’t get to finish out our season last year.”

ANNELISE LEBEDA

ELPS Archery Shoots for the Stars

JACK TIMOTHY HARRISON

Reporter

“Kids who need a niche will find me.” That’s what physical education teacher Casey Bain told ELi about her experience teaching archery in the East Lansing Public Schools.

Bain spent 17 years teaching in the classroom at Marble Elementary School, but looking for a change of pace and having always been active person, she transitioned to the gym in 2010.

Bain said she was introduced to archery after a colleague gave her the idea. She started the program as quickly as she could.

Today, the target for the program keeps moving with 70 archers across Marble Elementary, MacDonald Middle School, and East Lansing High School. Archers competed in tournaments ranging from states in 2015 and 2016, to nationals in 2017 and 2018, and to the world championship—with two archers qualifying in 2019 and two this year.

So how has the program developed and how has it weathered the challenges of the pandemic and a very different season?

ELPS belongs to the National Archery in Schools Program (NASP), which allows public schools to compete in its competitions if archery is taught in those schools.

Bain said she started the East Lansing chapter with 11 fourth- and fifth-graders at Marble Elementary in 2015-2016 season. When those students wanted to continue in middle school, Bain said she would find a way. When eighth-graders wanted to continue in high school, she made it happen by finding willing teachers there.

“So our program is growing in numbers, but we’re also, you know, eventually, we’re going to be a lot stronger as our coaches get stronger in coaching and as our kids come to the program with that background as the wave rides up so to speak,” Bain said.

Bain said the elementary team has about 24 to 30 students for a typical season. The middle school team has “blown up” from 10 to 45 archers, and the entire elementary and middle school team qualified for states in 2019. She said high school team is still growing — it currently has seven players — as word is spreading.

Bain told ELi that students “find this team because there are so many people out there that are not mainstream sport kids...They do not want contact sports, but this provides a niche. It provides a team, a sense of belonging. It’s individually yet team oriented. It’s a way to just set goals and just work toward feeling good about something.”

Bain said she is the organizer of practices and tournaments; she does the communication and serves as the treasurer. The other big part of the team’s success is the role of parent volunteers who help with one-on-one coaching.

Robert Hartley is a parent volunteer in the program with a son on the middle school team. He said it is great to see archers be successful and the archery program expanding, adding that the East Lansing team wants to help other programs grow.

“I think probably the next milestone for our program is to host our own event here in East Lansing, bringing in archers from other communities,” Hartley said. “That would help us not only for attracting more archers to grow the team, but to help recruit additional volunteers to staff the event, to raise money for equipment, to repay those surrounding communities that have hosted us for events in the past.”

Hartley said he has an archery background that

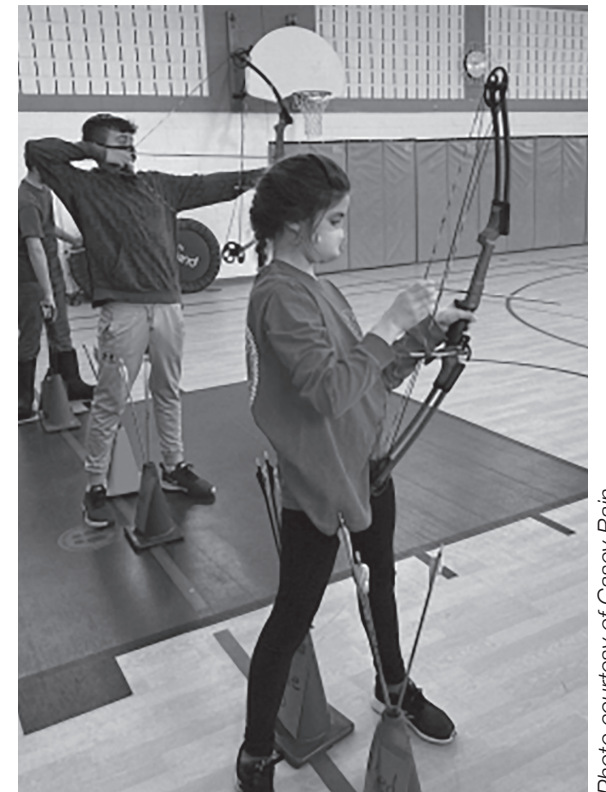


Photo courtesy of Casey Bain.

The ELPS archery program experienced great success amid the pandemic.

helps him coach, but plenty of students and families do not have backgrounds. He notes that archery is “a sport that’s not dependent on size or strength, so individuals can compete on equal footing.”

For a non-pandemic year, practice is held three days a week, and students come during specified times. Bain is there from about 3:45 p.m. until 7:00 or 7:30 p.m. and holds two to four practices, depending on how many students attend.

Bain said Marble’s gym is small, holding 11 targets maximum, with two students per target rotating.

“That’s 12 hours of volunteer time. That is just a lot of time commitment for me, plus the Saturday tournaments,” Bain said. “I love it, and that’s why I do it, I mean it’s for the kids. I can’t see another way around it.”

Due to Covid-19, several adjustments were made to the program. Bain said students only had a month to practice before the state tournament in March, and roughly 40 archers participated. She said she was grateful the superintendent allowed the team to practice, unlike in other districts, and said for those students that wanted to return to school in a safe environment, it was beneficial. One practice was also held outdoors.

Bain said the Portage Central and Howell tournaments were in-person, so students who were not comfortable participated virtually at Marble, and then the scores were sent over. This did create more long days for her, as she had to drive between locations, but long tournaments are nothing new for her.

There was some relearning with wearing masks, but Bain said students were “thrilled” to be able to shoot. NASP requires 10 hours of teaching, so she did virtual lessons on Zoom, and students practiced with a string bow.

Bain is proud of the archers, especially those who go up against opponents with years of experience. She said students can be paired with those several grades and sizes bigger, so the kindness among archers is neat to see.

“It’s in their heart why they’re doing this. Nobody’s forcing them to do this tournament. Nobody’s forced them to do anything. So I love the spirit. We call it, like the ‘spirit of an archer,’ that you know you’re a good person inside, and you’re good archer or you’re growing to be a good archer in terms of skill.”

TAKE THE SURVEY

Scan the QR Code to take the survey online, or send us your answers to these two questions by writing to ELi at PO Box 115, East Lansing MI 48826-0115.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

ELi Wants to know what you think

1

If you are planning to vote, what are the biggest “election issues” for you? In other words, what issues are likely to guide your choice of candidates?

2

What questions would you like to see asked of the Council candidates at the live forums or debates, and by ELi in our reporting?

2021 EAST LANSING CITY COUNCIL ELECTION

How can your vote be more informed?

ELi Staff Report

At ELi, we don’t endorse candidates because we don’t believe it is the job of news reporters or editors to tell you how to vote. Voting is about what you value, not what we might. So our goal is to get you the information you need to make an informed choice.

VOTER GUIDE

Find our continuously updated voter guide at eastlansinginfo.news/2021voterguide/

How can you be more informed?

Consider holding off on voting until after the public candidate forums.

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is partnering with ELi to bring voters’ questions and issues to the candidates. Take our survey (see the top of this page) and we will get your responses to the LWV forum organizers. Then, watch the LWV forums to see the candidates in action.

ELi is also partnering with ASMSU in the same fashion. We believe voters can learn a lot from these forums.

Note there are other, smaller candidate forums happening around town. Check the ELi calendar online for information.

Watch recorded meetings.

Five of the candidates have recently served in City government: Dana Watson and Ron Bacon as Council appointees; Dan Bollman as Planning Commission Chair; Chuck Grigsby as Chair of the Human Rights Commission and Study Committee on an Independent Police Oversight Commission; Adam Delay on the

Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission.

You can watch videos of meetings to see those people in action at www.cityofeastlansing.com/576/Agendas-Minutes-Videos.

ELi will also be bringing you a recap of voting records for these candidates so you can know how they voted on various issues. We look particularly at split votes to help you discern how candidates have managed controversial matters.

Keep an eye on ELi.


During this Council election as previous ones, we will be bringing you not just voting records but analyses of campaign finance records and fact-checks of political mailers. Sign up for our free emailed newsletters at [eastlansinginfo.news/mailers](mailto:eastlansinginfo.news@mailers) so you don’t miss anything.

Are you not online?

If you have no internet connection, please, write to us at P.O. Box 115, East Lansing, MI 48826, and we will get you print-outs of our campaign reporting.

Meet the candidates

The deadline to file to run for City Council was July 20, 2021.

FOUR-YEAR SEAT CANDIDATES (Vote for 2)					TWO-YEAR SEAT CANDIDATE (Vote for 1)	
 <p>DANA WATSON</p> <p>Dana Watson tells ELi that she is running for City Council because she wants to support and create policies relating to the environment, the economy, and inclusion. Three important issues Watson lists as motivating her run for Council: the pandemic and moving forward from it; housing; and police reform.</p>	 <p>CHUCK GRIGSBY</p> <p>Chuck Grigsby tells ELi that he is running for City Council because he believes transparency with the community is a priority that urgently needs addressing on Council. Three other important goals Grigsby lists as motivating his run for Council: addressing budgetary issues after the pandemic, promoting economic development, and creating better relationships with other municipalities.</p>	 <p>DAN BOLLMAN</p> <p>Daniel (Dan) Bollman is running for City Council because he wants to bring to that legislative body his experience chairing the Planning Commission and working with zoning. Three issues Bollman lists as motivating his run for Council include: maintaining and strengthening the City’s relationship with Michigan State University; having Council members with substantial local-government experience who empower City staff; and addressing issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion, specifically with regard to how DEI relates to budgeting and zoning.</p>	 <p>ADAM DELAY</p> <p>Adam DeLay tells ELi that he is running for City Council because he wants to reinvest 25 percent of the East Lansing Police Department’s operating budget by 2025. Three important issues DeLay lists as motivating his run for Council: restructuring the police department; budgetary issues resulting from the pandemic; and government transparency.</p>	 <p>GEORGE BROOKOVER</p> <p>George Brookover is running for East Lansing City Council because he wants to see more comprehensive decision-making processes in the City. Three issues motivating his run for Council include: managing City fiscal issues; improving infrastructure and zoning decisions; and respecting and enhancing diversity.</p>	 <p>RON BACON</p> <p>Ron Bacon tells ELi that he is running for City Council because he is interested in bringing a positive business perspective to grow the City through reduction of redundancies and inefficiencies, greater cooperative alignment, and clarified regulation that promotes economic development. Three issues he lists as motivating his run for Council: legacy costs, including the unfunded pension debt; addressing the need for infrastructure improvements while construction costs continue to rise; and revenue recovery post-pandemic.</p>	 <p>MIKEY MANUEL</p> <p>Mikey Manuel is running for East Lansing City Council because he wants to bring a total open-door policy for residents to provide their opinions, and to help keep small business sustainable. Three issues motivating his run include: looking into local tax rates and how dollars are allocated; diversity; and dealing with the aftermath of the pandemic.</p>
 <p>Scan for Watson’s full profile.</p>	 <p>Scan for Grigsby’s full profile.</p>	 <p>Scan for Bollman’s full profile.</p>	 <p>Scan for DeLay’s full profile.</p>	 <p>Scan for Brookover’s full profile.</p>	 <p>Scan for Bacon’s full profile.</p>	 <p>Scan for Manuel’s full profile.</p>