

The chief obstacle
to the progress of the human race
is the human race.

—Don Marquis

FREE

More distress for downtown hotels

The news last week that the National Restaurant and International Housewares associations both cancelled their Chicago meetings for 2021 was just more bad news for the local hotel industry that continues to suffer due to the economic lockdown and lack of tourists and travelers.

Some 26 downtown hotels have already closed, or gone dormant. And while some hotel owners have tried to cut deals with their lenders, the list of those now facing foreclosure is growing.

Combined, those two shows were estimated to attract 126,000 exhibitors and attendees, and generate a regional economic impact of almost \$210 million, Cynthia McCafferty of McPier, the agency that operates McCormick Place, told the Tribune.

Those two shows are part of 59 events scheduled at McCormick Place this year from June 1 through Dec. 31, including 39 major events that could draw as many as 878,000 visitors and account for about 880,000 hotel room nights, according to estimates from McPier. Since last year's economic lockdown began, McPier has lost a crushing 214 events. That loss has decimated



The 225-room Hotel Felix, 111 W. Huron St., defaulted on a \$47 million loan after making no loan payments since May, 2020. Many downtown hotels are now teetering on the verge of failing.

the travel, hotel, dining and entertainment industries in Chicago.

While the biggest name to fall into foreclosure remains the Palmer House Hilton, in River North, the owners of the Hotel Felix and Holiday Inn Express Chicago Magnificent Mile were both recently hit with foreclosure lawsuits for defaulting on loans.

(Last September Wells Fargo Bank filed a lawsuit against the Palmer House Hilton because the owner was in default on its \$333.2 million mortgage.)

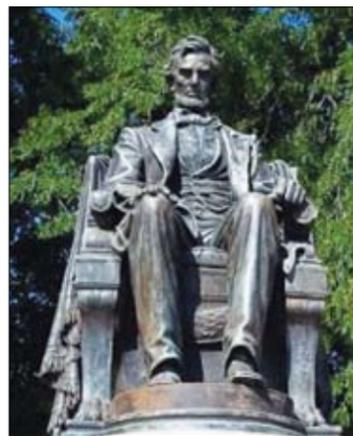
The 174-room Holiday Inn Express, 640 N. Wabash Ave., (formerly the Hotel Cass) was hit with a foreclosure complaint in Dec., 2020, on their \$23.5 million loan.

And the 225-room Hotel Felix, 111 W. Huron St., defaulted on a \$47 million loan after making no loan payments on their property since May, 2020.

The next one to fall may be in the Loop, the 403-room W Chicago - City Center, 172 W. Adams St. They just disclosed last month that they've stopped making debt payments in January on a \$76 million loan tied to the property. Meanwhile, according to Bloomberg Media, the 523-room Residence Inn/SpringHill Suites Hotel, 410 N. Dearborn St., in River North has also stopped paying on their \$120 million in debt.

Fate of Grant Park statues in balance at March 17 meeting

Is virtual-only meeting a fait accompli?



The seated President Abraham Lincoln sculpture in Grant Park.

STORY BY PETER VON BUOL

Officially designated as a city park in 1844, what today is known as Grant Park has long been considered the city's front yard. The nearly 320-acre park was renamed Grant Park to honor Ulysses S. Grant, who had served his country as the Union commander who defeated the Confederate army and as the 18th president. It is home to landmarks such as Buckingham Fountain, Millennium Park, the Art Institute, and the Museum Campus.

Therefore, the park is not simply an amenity for its adjacent neighborhood but is considered for Chicago residents and tourists. In 1836 it was officially deemed as Public Ground: A common to remain forever open, clear and free of any buildings or other obstruction.

The park has also long been the location of major festivals such as Lollapalooza, Jazz, Gospel and Blues fests, and the Taste of Chicago.

It has also long been considered a prominent location for some of the city's most well-known statues and outdoor sculptures.

Despite the park's prominence, the park's official volunteer body, the Grant Park Advisory Council [GPAC], is using the opportunity presented by the ongoing pandemic to host a Zoom-only meeting 6 to 8 p.m. March 17, during which it will listen to public input before it makes its decisions regarding which statues it wants to support and which ones it will want removed.

Ordinarily, meetings of Chi-

'What's said here, stays here'

Committee that ID'd 41 public monuments for possible removal remains opaque

Committee formed by Mayor Lightfoot concluded statues of Columbus, Washington, Lincoln and others should be reviewed, but City Hall isn't releasing many details about how those decisions came to be because it says the committee isn't a public body.

BY DAVID JACKSON
Better Government Association

Amid violent protests this summer over police brutality and civil rights, Mayor Lori Lightfoot in the middle of the night removed statues of Christopher Columbus that had become a focal point of the demonstrations.

Lightfoot also formed a committee to conduct a thorough review to assess if other public art should be removed or changed and promised the newly formed Chicago Monuments Project Ad-

SAID see p. 8

Chicago Park District Advisory councils, (which are official government bodies) are open to the public. That means, participants can stand up to make comments and to ask questions of the participants, and lobby other attendees to switch sides. There usually is not a time limit for this part of their meetings and the process is considered transparent and democratic.

Meeting via Zoom does not allow a similar back and forth exchange and does not have the same amount of transparency. This newspaper has been hearing many complaints about the opacity of Zoom-only meetings where one person literally has the power to mute all conversation and debate, or even shut a meeting down early, before everyone has been able to speak up. Local branches of government and civic organi-

FATE see p. 8

Cops looking for gunman after bullets fly into LSD condos

BY CWBCHICAGO

Residents of three Lake Shore Dr. high-rises are demanding answers after bullets have flown through the windows of four condo units over the past three weeks.

Windows of three condos in side-by-side buildings along the 1100 block of N. Lake Shore Dr. were struck by gunfire early Feb. 11, according to CPD records.

And another window was shattered by a bullet around 3:15 a.m. March 4. At least one more round struck the outside of the building next door, too.

Cops who were on patrol heard the gunfire March 4 and 911 callers reported the shots, too. But no shooter was found. Detectives spent that afternoon searching for surveillance cameras that might help them identify the gunman.

"It strains plausibility to say there's no connection" between the February and March incidents, Ald. Brian Hopkins [2nd] said. But, so far, police have no



Various condos along N. Lake Shore Dr. in the Gold Coast have been struck by gunfire on the 29th, 27th, 17th, and 12th floors.

evidence that ties them together.

Condos have been struck on the 29th, 27th, 17th, and 12th floors of the buildings, he said. Other rounds became lodged in the buildings' facades, according to residents. No injuries have been reported.

Some residents are concerned that the shots have been fired from another building because

one round lodged in a bedroom wall with no line-of-sight to the ground.

"I still am of the strong belief that the first [bullet] in our building was a rifle shot from height," one resident told this reporter. "I took a string from the hole in the window to where the bullet hit over the lady's headboard. It was a flat line — it was not shot from the ground up."

In fact, Hopkins said, police think the shooter was standing on the ground when they fired into the air or at the buildings. Cops do not believe the shooters fired from vehicles, he added.

"It's an active investigation. There's more than one detective working on it," Hopkins said. "Preliminary analysis suggests [the weapon] is a handgun. Possibly a nine [millimeter]."

Police "seem optimistic" that their search for camera footage will yield clues, Hopkins said, adding that detectives may issue a community alert to see if they can drum up clues or helpful video.



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Seeking safe passage back to realm of civility and imagination



By Thomas J. O'Gorman

Have you found the newest "trail of bread crumbs" from the pandemic in America?

Along the lanes of Chicago's wards, it's all around us. On the sidewalks, down the alleys, blowing across our lawns? Found strewn about in our "dibs" parking spots after the snow melted.

It's like the newest Needle Park.

I feel like calling my martini expert, Shelley Howard, a man of exhaustive urbanity. Maybe he could explain this phenomenon, this crisis of new litter. You need someone with an expansive vision of city life to see whatever is beyond peripheral measure.

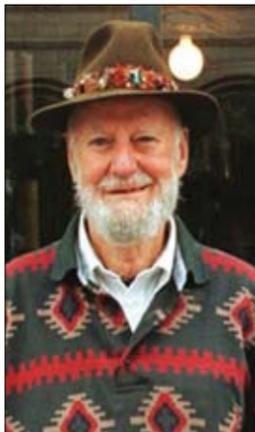
I'd ask Shelley, "What are people thinking?" He'd probably see the litter, as a switch, an ironic twist of urban "egg-istentialism." That's the Chicago philosophy that permits you to alter the discarding of life-shortening materials.

"I don't smoke no more," a Chicagoan might admit. "No cigarette butts to throw away in public. Looks like I'll just toss away my COVID-19 face masks."

Shelley could crack that Chitown code. As mysterious as Mayor Lightfinger's uniforms.



Lady Bird Johnson



Lawrence Ferlinghetti



(L-R) Bob Donlon (Rob Donnelly), Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg, Robert LaVigne, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti stand outside City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco, 1956. Photo by © Allen Ginsberg

He might also recommend a cure. Shaken, not stirred. Extra cheese-stuffed olives please.

I thought Chicago had gotten better about littering. I thought the Millennials picked up after themselves? Who's tossing away their pandemic face masks on the sidewalks? Disgruntled Boomers? Naughty Gen X'ers?

You know it can't be a dementia-ridden "greatest generation?"

Glad Lady Bird Johnson isn't seeing this. She'd be catatonic. She really did clean up America, Kleenex by Kleenex. Popsicle stick by popsicle stick, when she set out to "beautify" America she was a two-fisted litter foe, shaking up the pig-pen folk littering from coast to coast.

People would be singled out across the nation for the sloppy treatment of American landscape. Lady Bird was a no-nonsense litter hater. Tougher than Jackie Kennedy.

I bring this up because Lady Bird was the author of our childhood indoctrination: "Keep America Beautiful." She made us aware of our need to work to save our nation's natural elegance. She gave great efforts to spruce up America's highways. She planted vast reaches of flora across the nation's wild reserves. Her efforts have been going on for 65 years. She made an enormous difference before anyone knew what the word ecology meant.

Lady Bird was a sweetheart. I knew her years later while in Mar-

tha's Vineyard. She was always proud of the job she had done. I can only roll my eyes at what that gracious lady would make of face masks cast hither and yon.

She'd see it for the disgrace it is.

As if face masks in the petunia beds aren't bad enough, our newspaper's crime reporter tells horrific stories of another late trend unfolding on Lake Shore Dr. Apparently, six times since Feb. 15, people of ill intent have shot randomly into apartment upper floor windows. Six times this has occurred. Never heard a warning from the mayor, even though so much of her time is spent running police operations. No "You better watch out" notices posted anywhere on city-sites. No door to door conversations with local doormen and building supers. No posters in the lobbies warning lakeshore residents that trouble is out searching for them. Or hunting them down.

That's not the city Mayor Lightfingers want to rule. She wants the one where everyone is happy with the level of crime, mayhem and murder.

Lightfoot has become a hybrid of Mayors Big Bill Thompson, Jane Byrne and Levi Boone. Like Thompson, she wants to be pals with the perpetrators of urban crime. (Hello Al Capone.) Like Byrne, she came from nowhere to win office by a landslide. (Eternal enmity from the machine.) And she isn't against becoming a traitor to the folks who elected her. (Boone was a secret Confederate and needed Lincoln to absolve him of his Civil War disloyalty.)

Chicagoans don't know how to read the mayor, or understand her strange melancholic disposition. She lives in a strange, defensive personal environment, her staff has acknowledged. No one's calling her for lunch dates.

This is a strange world of litter, condo roulette and Soviet-style mayoral rule. Neither attractive, functional or beautiful to many.

Maybe we're "driving the Beat road." That's the way the Beat poets would have described it 60 or 70 years ago. The late Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder and pals, the poets who correctly saw themselves as "The Coney Island of the Mind." They were our nation's post World War II intelligentsia. Writers who were often brutalized in the era of Eisenhower and J. Edgar Hoover.

"If you would be a poet," writes Ferlinghetti, who just died at 101, "create works capable of answer-

ing the challenge of apocalyptic times, even if this meaning sounds apocalyptic."

Ferlinghetti was a poet, but had a most acute and unusual political edge, and political skills that most poets never see. He was part of the Beat writers, a fresh generation of rebellious wordsmiths who rejected the conventional expectations of American life. The Beat meant struggle to many. To others the tempo of the times. And to others it was a defining spirituality.

For Ferlinghetti, who owned and operated a New York style used bookstore in San Francisco, it defined a sense of artistic and intellectual freedom. That's why he could turn up his nose at artistic and legal critics who stormed him when he published Alan Ginsberg's "Howl." The poem that was the Beat's manifesto.

He successfully cracked the puritan American ideal in the U.S. Supreme Court, rescuing "Howl" from the censors' pen.

In "Howl," Ginsberg digs deep into the underworld of contemporary America's marginalized citizens. "The best minds of my generation," he notes. And then describes in graphic detail all the goings on between groups, like drug users and homosexuals.

When poets and painters are given long years to create, they change the dynamic by which they are remembered.

Nowhere is that truer than now with the death of Ferlinghetti in San Francisco. Decades after his artistic contemporaries died.

That's why it's important to remember he was a "Beat poet," tied forever to Ginsberg and Michael McClure. McClure just died himself in May.

Ferlinghetti will always remain at the center of the Beat Movement because he was the artistic practitioner with the political skills to fight the cultural limitations always endured by the arts. That's why we must remember him as the giant of post-World War II American verse and culture, paint and printing. Bookshop and the verbal taboo, as well.

Remember him. Read him. He's the hero, forever saved from book burning by his courage and erudite literary authority. He re-centered American culture. No easy task, and gave us much to celebrate.

"Constantly Risking Absurdity," is a great place to start: *Constantly risking absurdity and death*

whenever he performs above the heads his audience

the poet like an acrobat climbs on rime

to a high wire of his own making and balancing on eyebeams above a sea of faces paces his way

to the other side of the day

What is significant for our world today is that the Beat poets embraced life like never before. The Beat was their escape route across the middle class convention of American life. With it they exploded the culture.

Perhaps we need "the Beat," once again. A welcome combative facing today's woke culture in America. And litter on the streets of our poetic intuitions. And thugs crushing cultural boundaries with politicians too caught up in the terror of their own creation before we find safe passage back into the realm of civility and imagination. Where art lifts and carries us to larger and more expansive awarenesses of our humanity. And ability to crack the secret codes of culture with the passwords of the heart. A curious trail of crumbs.

SAM I AM: Last week at their

SEEKING see p. 2

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Spring has sprung: Poop and participatory budgeting



Heart of the 'Hood

by Felicia Dechter

So there I was, happily trotting out to my car ready to enjoy one of these recent gorgeous, sunny days. I was talking on my phone, not really paying attention to where I was walking but thrilled to be getting away from the house with one COVID vaccine under my belt. Life was good.

That is, until I stepped in the most humongous, extremely fresh, smelly, and squishy pile of dog poop I've ever laid eyes (and feet) on. I swear it must have come from a Great Dane or Saint Bernard and if I didn't know better, perhaps a horse.

Ugh. I screamed in disgust and of course ran back to the house for my husband's help because he is the one who can stomach those kinds of things, not me. With me gagging and ready to vomit, I had him pull off my shoes and throw them in the garbage. They were just too immersed in poop to salvage.

Yep, Spring is around the corner and with the big thaw comes a lot of mounds. Please pick up after your dogs, folks.

Dog poop isn't just gross, it's also a feast for the rats and the bacteria and parasites in dog waste -- such as E coli, salmonella and worms -- can spread disease to other pooches. And even if your dog does not appear sick, their poop can carry harmful diseases including the Coronavirus. Not only can other pets be at risk, but kids who play outside and all of you getting ready to do some spring gardening are also risking contamination.

Also, please be sure to clean

New mural coming to Andersonville, feedback wanted

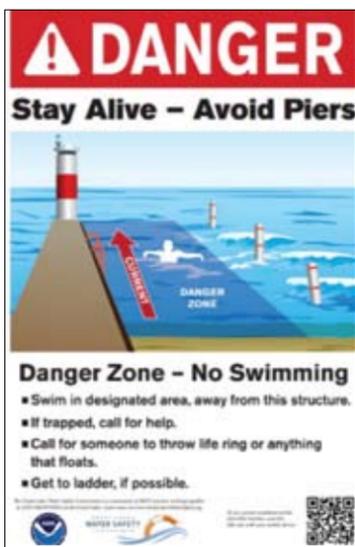
Feedback is being sought for a new mural coming to Andersonville this year. No site location has yet been announced.

The new mural will be undertaken in collaboration with the Andersonville Chamber of Commerce and Chicago Assoc. of REALTORS, who have contracted artist Molly Costello, who will be working on a new street mural for the neighborhood this coming spring/summer.

Before she starts working on designing the mural specifics, Costello is seeking feedback through an online survey from local residents about what some favorite spots and activities are in the area. To participate in the survey, call the chamber of commerce at 773-728-2995.



Please clean up after your dog.



Residents of the 49th Ward can vote until Friday for bi-lingual safety signage on their beaches.



up if your dog poops on the sand or near the water on the beach. I don't know about you, but I don't want to eventually be swimming in it nor do I want to be eventually drinking it, no matter how filtered.

So if you're going to own one of our precious four-legged friends, please clean up after it. I thank you, my husband thanks you, and my dog, Mac, thanks you.

49th Ward leads the way... all the talk about dog poop led me to Pottawattomie Park, 7340 N. Rogers Ave., where a dog park and accessible path is on the agenda to vote for in the 49th Ward Participatory Budgeting, of which

voting ends Friday. For the above reasons I'd love to see a place for Fidos and Fefes in the park. I was thinking the \$30K price tag was a bit hefty though, until I saw that also includes accessible paths, and that to me is exceptionally important. I would also love to see 100 new street and park trees (\$66k) and a foot-wash station at Leone Beach would be great (although expensive at \$35k), as those are also included.

But by far the most pressing and most important of all the issues in the Participatory Budgeting is not just a 49th Ward problem, it's a citywide, lakefront concern. To me, the proposed bi-lingual safety signage should be posted at every

beach in the city.

For \$10k, permanent, illustrated signage -- in English and Spanish -- indicating the dangers of structural and other dangerous currents would be installed at strategic locations at 49th Ward beaches. In the five year span from 2014 to 2019, 10 people drowned, including two 13-year-old girls.

Halle Quezada, a founder of the Chicago Alliance for Waterfront Safety, was on the beach during one of those fateful drownings, helpless as she and others watched the horrific scene unfold as 13-year-old Darihanne Torres lost her life. Quezada, a mother of two, helped pull one of two girls out of the water that night but Darihanne was unable to be saved and drowned roughly 20 minutes after lifeguards had left for the day.

I wholeheartedly agree with Quezada when she says the signage is badly needed. But again, it is desperately needed across the city at our beaches.

"We really need structural current signs at the structures known to cause deadly structural currents," said Quezada. "(It's) so wild they aren't there already."

As someone who has lived spitting distance from the beach for nearly four decades, I too

have witnessed the tragedy of drowning. I've watched mothers, brought to their knees, wailing uncontrollably when they find out their child has died. I've seen divers out in the water for what seems like hours, searching, as loved ones stand waiting with anguish clearly on their faces. I've seen the looks of the policemen when a body is carried out of the water.

I think it's one of those things that no matter how many times you've seen it happen, it still cuts at your heart. And even when it appears calm and inviting, Lake Michigan can be treacherous and deadly and very deceiving. Be careful.

Please, if you live in the 49th Ward, vote for this extremely imperative addition to our lakefront. If you don't live in the 49th Ward, talk to your alderman about it happening in your ward. Again, this issue stems the boundaries of our city.

The lucky ones are rescued and get out of Lake Michigan alive but many others are not. The signage will help. We could also use water safety rings and rope, but this first step is a step in the right direction.

Helping to make the lakefront safe is one of the best things you can do for your community. Please vote to make the beaches in Chicago safer. After all, the life you help to save could be that of someone you love.

Lincoln Park neighborhood associations organizing over common goals

A new group is forming called the Lincoln Park Alliance. The goal is to bring the seven existing Lincoln Park neighborhood associations together to discuss common goals, challenges, and opportunities.

A virtual meeting is being held 6 p.m. March 22 where neighbors can learn about historical, current, and upcoming projects, as well as the long-term visions from associations on neighborhood's businesses, parks, public safety, government relations and services.

In an earlier era another organizing effort was formed under the Lincoln Park Conservation

Association [LPCA]. LPCA was formed in March, 1954 as an umbrella organization, connecting these neighborhood associations to each other as well as to provide a single voice to funnel requests for improved city services for the redeveloping community.

The associations putting this effort together are the Old Town and Ranch triangles, the Lincoln Central, Mid North, Sheffield Neighbors, Wrightwood Neighbors and Park West Community associations.

For more information email wrightwoodneighbors@gmail.com.



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Police Beat...

Armed robberies in Rogers Park, West Ridge

Police are warning residents and businesses of Rogers Park and West Ridge of recent robbery/retail/motor vehicle related thefts.

In these incidents, unknown offender(s) entered a clothing retail store and took items. When fleeing the retail store the offender(s) approached a victim, displayed a handgun and demanded the victim's

personal property and/or vehicle. The offenders then flee in a gray four door sedan.

Incidents include one on the 1700 block of W. Howard 2:04 p.m. March 1; one on the 2000 block of W. Lunt Ave. 2:10 p.m. March 1, and another on the 6000 block of N. Western Ave. 10:37 a.m. March 3.

The offenders are described as male Blacks, 17-21, 5'-9" tall, with dreadlocks, wearing all red clothing, a black jacket, black jogging suit with gray markings and a yellow jacket.

Boystown robber drove more than a block with victim clinging to his car

Prosecutors say a victim clung to the outside of a robber's moving car for over a block before he was thrown to the pavement as the driver made a turn in Boystown last October. Charges have just been filed in the case.

According to the allegations, the victim arranged to buy an iPhone 11 from Antoine Gibson for \$300 via the OfferUp app. The men allegedly met near the corner of Halsted and Aldine streets around 10 a.m. on Oct. 30 to complete the deal.

According to prosecutors, the transaction stalled when the victim was unable to confirm that the device's IMEI number was not listed on an internet database of stolen phones. Eventually, the victim allegedly handed \$300 to Gibson, who remained seated in his car, and Gibson gave him an iPhone box in return.

But, prosecutors say, the box was empty, and the victim reached into the vehicle to grab his \$300 back. That's when Gibson, 23, allegedly began driving eastbound on Aldine with the victim hanging out of his driver's window.

A CPD surveillance camera captured footage of a man hanging out of a car as it sped across Halsted Street, according to a CPD report. And a flurry of 911 callers reported seeing a man dangling from a car while its driver tried to shake him from the vehicle.

According to the allegations, the victim held onto the car all the way to Broadway, where Gibson made a right-hand turn that sent the victim flying onto the street in front of a Stan's Donuts.

Police traced the car to Gibson via its license plate number, which a witness provided, prosecutors said. Screenshots of the OfferUp transaction track back to Gibson, as do a phone number and email address that he allegedly used to contact the victim, according to the state.

A fugitive apprehension team

arrested Gibson on Feb. 26. Prosecutors charged him with one count of robbery.

Gibson's defense attorney says he works and has no criminal history. Judge Susana Ortiz released him on his own recognizance.

Two men stole truckload of dry cleaning in Streeterville



Alejandro Aguirre, Nicholas Soto

People will steal anything if it's not nailed down, the old saying goes. Even a truck full of dry cleaning, apparently.

Two men are now facing felony charges for allegedly speeding away with a truckload of laundry after its driver left the vehicle running in Streeterville.

The driver left the truck in the driveway of a building in the 200 block of E. Pearson while he ran inside around 10:15 a.m. Jan. 26. Unfortunately, he left the key fob in the vehicle.

It didn't take long before Nicholas Soto, 31, and Alejandro Aguirre, 21, decided to hop inside and drive it away, according to prosecutors.

After hearing witnesses describe the suspects, cops had a pretty good idea of who they were. Officers met with Soto and Aguirre a few minutes before the theft about a disturbance in nearby Lakeshore Park, according to a CPD report.

The van, which was emblazoned with the dry cleaning company's name, quickly made its way toward Wicker Park. Cops were able to track it down because it had a GPS tracker installed, prosecutors said.

Officers pulled the van over in the 1900 block of N. Milwaukee about 20 minutes after it went missing. They said Soto was driving and Aguirre was in the passenger seat.

Prosecutors said Soto admitted to taking the van after seeing it unattended.

Both men are now charged with possessing a stolen motor vehicle. Judge Charles Beach set bail for Soto at \$20,000 and ordered him to go onto electronic monitoring if he posts a 10% deposit bond. Beach released Aguirre on his own recognizance.

Carjacking team mugged woman in parking lot of Home Depot

A group of men who hijacked two cars on the Northwest Side over the weekend robbed a woman as she walked on a Home Depot parking lot, 1230 W. North Ave., March 1, according to Chicago police.

The 64-year-old victim said she was walking on the store's lot around 12:15 p.m. when the offenders rolled by, and the driver reached out to grab her purse. She was dragged to the ground by the force and suffered bruises and cuts, a CPD report said.

On Sunday, the same men carjacked two vehicles — one in Avondale and the other in Hermosa, police said in a community alert Monday.

They took a white 2018 Chevy SUV at gunpoint in the 3000 block of N. Kilbourn around noontime. Then, they hijacked a woman's black Lincoln MKZ at gunpoint on the 3000 block of N. Kedzie around 1:10 p.m.

Police released three suspect descriptions in the community alert: male, Black, 20- to 23-years-old, 5'-7" to 5'-9" tall, 150 lbs, red sweatshirt; male, Black, 20- to 23-years-old, 5'-7" to 5'-9" tall, 150 lbs, bright yellow jacket, and male, Black, 20- to 25-years-old, black sweatshirt.

Anyone with information about the suspects can contact Area Five detectives at 312-746-7394 about crime pattern P21-5-017.

Man fired gun to break-up brawl that left victim stabbed in Loop

A man fired a gun into the air to break up a large fight outside a Loop hotel Feb. 28 that left another man stabbed, prosecutors said March 1.

Police responded to calls of a fight and shots fired around 2:17 a.m. outside the LondonHouse hotel, 85 E. Wacker. Officers found a 36-year-old man with multiple stab wounds to his hip and leg, but nobody was shot, police said.

A security guard reportedly told officers he saw a man wearing a distinctive coat fire a gun into the air and then walk around the corner.

Police allegedly found Edwin Solis, 23, nearby wearing a jacket like the one the guard described. They detained him and then reviewed surveillance video that shows him firing a gun into the air to disperse the fight, prosecutors said.



Edwin Solis

Investigators found one shell casing outside the hotel. Another casing that police found in Solis' pocket is the same caliber and has the same manufacturer as the one cops found on the ground, according to prosecutors.

Solis has an Illinois Firearm Owner's ID card, but he does not have a concealed carry license, prosecutors said. He allegedly admitted to firing the gun during a conversation with police.

Prosecutors charged him with reckless discharge of a firearm. His private attorney, Lawrence X. O'Reilly, said Solis has no criminal record.

Judge David Navarro set bail at \$25,000. Solis will need to post a \$2,500 deposit bond to get out of jail. Navarro specifically denied O'Reilly's request to have Solis released on electronic monitoring rather than requiring a cash deposit. Solis is not accused of being involved in the stabbing.

After cops find car linked to looting, driver faces gun charge

A Chicago man is facing Class X felony charges after an incident that began when a CPD squad car's license plate reader detected a vehicle that's been associated with last summer's looting.



Daveion Matthews

Prosecutors said police were on patrol in the 4100 block of N. Paulina around 2:24 a.m. Feb. 27 when their license plate reader alerted them to the car. Investigators determined the vehicle was used during looting incidents, and it had been flagged for impound should police come across it, according to the state.

As officers approached the car, its driver — the only occupant — got out and tried to enter the front door of a nearby home. But the door was apparently locked and the man went through a side gate into the backyard.

At the same time, a resident came out and told police that his garage door's burglar alarm had just been activated. Cops investigated and found Daveion Matthews, 24, hiding under the back porch, prosecutors said.

Police allegedly found a loaded handgun in the car's glove compartment.

Prosecutors said Matthews has prior convictions for aggravated battery causing great bodily harm in 2015 and unlawful use of a weapon by a felon in 2017. He is now charged with Class X armed habitual criminal, criminal damage to property, and criminal trespass to land.

Judge Susana Ortiz set Matthews' bail at \$5,000 and said he would be required to go onto electronic monitoring after posting a \$500 deposit bond.

Man burglarized Walgreens, says he "couldn't afford anything"

A Chicago man is charged with trying to burglarize a Walgreens in Boystown of more than \$3,000 worth of merchandise because he couldn't afford anything in the store, prosecutors said.

Police responded to the store at 3646 N. Broadway around 2:15 a.m. Feb. 25 after a security monitoring service saw someone break through the front door via a surveillance camera feed.

When officers arrived, they saw Imer Resumovic, 34, breaking glass inside the store with a hammer, prosecutors said. According to the allegations, he saw the cops, dropped the hammer on the counter, and ran to the back of the store.

Police said they found him hiding under a sink with a book bag containing \$3,169 worth of Apple products, liquor, and cigarettes.

According to prosecutors, Resumovic visited the store earlier in the week and "he was angry because he couldn't afford anything." Resumovic told police he planned to sell the merchandise to make money, prosecutors alleged. Judge Charles Beach released Resumovic on his own recognizance.

Man threatened to post condo receptionist's private pix online

A Chicago man threatened to post revealing photos of his condo building's front desk receptionist online to ruin the woman's reputation in a series of anonymous text messages, prosecutors said.



Brian Henager

Police detectives used a series of investigative techniques to track the messages and threats to Brian Henager, a 28-year-old man whom the alleged victim recognized as a resident of the building where she worked who made drunken come-ons, according to Assistant State's Attorney Franka D'Antignac.

The alleged threats began on March 29, 2020, when the woman received a text from an unfamiliar number that included an image of her nude breasts, D'Antignac said. While the woman's face was not visible, the victim recognized her body and the photo background.

A message that arrived with the image threatened to post revealing photos of the victim online unless she sent the anonymous person more nudes within 10 hours, D'Antignac said. The victim refused to comply.

Then, the woman received several more texts from the same number on August 14 and 15 that said the sender was looking for someone to work a modeling job. A follow-up text included another photo that included her face and the clothes she was wearing at the time — a bra and underwear — according to D'Antignac.

Once again, the sender ordered the victim to send explicit photos if she wanted to keep embarrassing images from being posted online where the victim's friends, family, and colleagues would see them.

The sender warned the victim that she would never find another job and the photos would "ruin her life," D'Antignac said. Instead of giving in to the demands, the victim contacted police.

Detectives tracked the sender's phone number through two different companies before identifying an email account and internet address used to establish the device's account, according to D'Antignac.

While the investigation was still on-going, the victim received another text from a different phone number on Jan. 1. It included a photo of her wearing lingerie.

Two days later, the victim's boyfriend and her cousin called the number and had a short conversation with a man who answered. D'Antignac said the cousin got a phone call from a different number a few minutes later, and the cousin recognized the voice as being the same from the brief conversation he just had.

Detectives tracked that phone number and linked it to Henager and a "Nick Ramsey Photos" Gmail address associated with the first phone that sent threats to the woman, D'Antignac said.

After seeing a photo of Henager, the alleged victim recognized him as someone who lives in the building. She told police that he approached her at the front desk on several occasions while drunk and asked her to engage in sex acts, but she always declined, D'Antignac alleged.

Prosecutors did not say how Henager might have secured private images of the woman, but the alleged victim said she kept the pictures on a personal laptop that she used at work, but she never sent the images to anyone.

Cops arrested Henager last week at a Gold Coast car dealership where he works. Prosecutors charged him with felony intimidation.

Police believe Henager sent similar messages to other women, too, D'Antignac told Judge Mary Marubio during his bond hearing this week.

Marubio ordered Henager to have no contact with the alleged victim and set his bail at \$10,000. He went home by posting a \$1,000 deposit bond.

Paroled murderer, working as janitor, raped girl in Loop doctor's office

A paroled murderer raped a 14-year-old girl in a closet at a Loop medical office building where he worked as a janitor while the victim's parents met with a doctor, prosecutors alleged last week.

Judge Susana Ortiz ordered Anthony McClore, 61, held in lieu of \$750,000 bail.



Anthony McClore

McClore was found guilty of two counts of murder in 1996 and received concurrent 45-year prison sentences, according to Illinois Dept. of Corrections records. He was released in 2018 after serving half of that time and went to work for a janitorial service, his public defender said.

On Nov. 23, 2020, McClore was working as a janitor when he offered a soda to the 14-year-old girl as she waited for her parents in a medical building on the 1100 block of S. Delano Ct., according to Assistant State's Attorney James Murphy

Many borrowers miss boat as home-loan rates rise



The Home Front

by Don DeBat

The bargain-rate mortgage boat may have hoisted anchor, leaving would-be home buyers and families seeking to refinance stranded on the shore.

On March 4, the interest rate on benchmark 30-year fixed home loans rose to 3.02% nationwide, reported Freddie Mac's Primary Mortgage Market Survey. That effectively closes the porthole for borrowers hoping to lock in a record-low mortgage rate in the 2%-range.

"Since reaching a low point in January, mortgage rates have risen by more than 30 basis points,

and the impact on purchase demand has been noticeable," noted Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist. "While purchase activity remains high, it has cooled off over the last few weeks and is currently on par with early March, 2020, prior to the pandemic."

Thirty-year fixed-mortgage interest rates ended 2020 at a rock-bottom 2.66%, the lowest level in the Freddie Mac survey history, which began in 1971. With home-loan rates setting new record lows for an amazing 16 times in 2020, thousands of first-time home buyers likely have smiles on their faces.

On Dec. 31, 2020, lenders nationwide were charging an average of 2.17% on 15-year-fixed loans. At the end of Dec., 2019, the 30-year fixed mortgage rates averaged 3.72%, while 15-year fixed loans averaged 3.16%.

On March 4, 30-year fixed loans averaged 3.02% nationwide, up from 2.97% a week earlier. A

year ago, 30-year fixed mortgages averaged 3.29%. Meanwhile, 15-year fixed home loans averaged 2.34%, unchanged from a week earlier. A year ago, the 15-year fixed mortgage averaged 2.79%.

On March 4, the interest rate on benchmark 30-year fixed home loans rose to 3.02% nationwide.

On March 5, Gateway Capital Mortgage in Chicago was quoting 2.877% on 30-year loans and 2.375% on 15-year mortgages, reported RateSeeker.com.

The Freddie Mac survey is focused on conventional, conforming, fully amortizing home purchase loans for borrowers who put 20% down and have excellent credit.

Khater predicted that the rise in mortgage rates over the next couple of months is "likely to be

more muted in comparison to the last few weeks, and we expect a strong spring sales season."

Analysts said long-term mortgage rates are creeping higher because of rising interest rates on 10-year Treasury notes, which have recently skyrocketed to 1.5% from a shockingly low 0.54% during the depths of the pandemic.

Optimism about future economic growth, success of the COVID-19 vaccine, and worries about a rise in inflation after the federal government pumps another \$1.9 trillion in stimulus funds into the economy also are pushing bond rates higher, experts say.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said he expects inflation to pick up in the coming months, but he did not expect that to alter the Fed's record-low interest rate policies unless there is a full recovery in the nation's job market.

RATES see p. 6

Lane Tech boys open season with a victory; Lincoln Park loses heartbreaker to North Lawndale



By Jack Lydon

After the last-minute postponement of the Farragut game on Friday, Feb. 26, the Lane Tech boys basketball team finally opened its season on

March 1, against Jones, beating them in a 40-34 defensive struggle.

Both teams came out of the 360-day layoff since their last high school basketball game, very rusty. Shots just would not fall. These jitters combined with very strong defensive efforts by both teams meant that after one quarter of basketball, the score was Lane 7, Jones 5.

The second quarter was not a whole lot better. The score at the half was Jones 15, Lane 12.

"First game jitters; that's gonna happen, especially after a year layoff and only having a couple practices," said Lane Tech head coach Nick Logalbo.

Both teams settled down at halftime and things felt a little more normal, well COVID normal.

Shots started falling. It turned into an exciting back and forth game. Lane's junior guard Sean Molloy sparked the Lane boys with nine of this game high 14 points in the third quarter. Interestingly, Sean Molloy is the youngest brother of Lane's girls' varsity basketball coach Megan Molloy.

With 1:06 left on the clock in the fourth quarter, Jones senior forward Niko Rosich tied the game at 37 with a long three-pointer.

Lane point guard senior Justin Brown quickly brought up the ball and with 50 seconds to go dished to Molloy. Off the shot fake, Molloy slashed into the lane and was



Lane Tech's Sean Molloy on his way to the winning shot in 40-37 victory over Jones.

called for a charge. With the foul, the ball went over to Jones with the game still tied with 39 seconds remaining.

Initially, Jones looked like it would play for the last shot but Rosich broke for the basket missing a layup. Molloy scrambled for the ball and dashed up court. Weaving his way through defenders, Molloy dropped in a right handed layup being fouled in the process with 20.2 seconds remaining.

Sean added the free throw giving Lane a 40-37 lead. There it would end.

"You know the Molloy boys; those kids are tough as nails. Sean is obviously [going to be] a really good player for us. We knew he would make those plays. The charge was questionable, but how about a junior responding like that? He wanted the ball right back," Logalbo said of Molloy.

Sean's older brother Michael Molloy was Lane's starting point guard several years ago. Brother Neil Molloy played football at Lane from 2011 to 2015, later playing college football at Illinois Wesleyan.

Sean Molloy had 14 points. Lane's senior center Aaron McQueen finished with 10 points. Justin Brown had seven.

Jones' Rosich also with 14 points. Jones' Devin Boston had

11 points.

One can view the entire game, include Lane Tech sophomore Alex Burstein's play-by-play, on Lane Tech Athletic's YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxdhVaJl8sQ&t=53s>

The Lincoln Park High School Lions boys varsity team had its home opener on March 3, against North Lawndale in another down-to-the-wire affair. This time it was the visiting North Lawndale Phoenix that would edge the home team for a 61-58 victory.

No opening game jitters in this one. Both teams came out running and scoring. Lincoln Park jumped out to a 23-12 first quarter lead largely by senior center Sincere Malone controlling the boards. Lincoln Park lead 42-35 at the half.

North Lawndale battled back in the second half eventually taking a 57-56 lead with 4:24 left in the fourth quarter.

"In the second half, we ran into a little foul trouble with our big fellow [senior center Sincere Malone] in the first half," said new Lincoln Park head coach Antwon Jennings.

"We adjusted. We went from playing man-to-man to zone, just trying to give them a different look," Jennings added. "We were just out of position. [North Lawndale's] second chance shots killed

us."

Even after losing its lead, the Lions battled the Phoenix in back-and-forth action late in the fourth.

Lincoln Park was in position to tie several times late in the game only down three in the last minute. The Lions had two open looks to tie late but two three pointers missed. A turned over by Lincoln Park with 15 seconds remaining sealed the victory for North Lawndale.

When asked what he told his players after missing two shots to tie, Jennings said, "Keep shooting the ball. I feel like I've got two of the best shooters in the City in Chris [Hammonds] and Julio [Montes]. I told Julio I will live with him taking those shots. You gotta take 'em," Jennings added. "I wouldn't do it any different."

Final was North Lawndale 61, Lincoln Park 58.

This is something of a disappointing 0-2 start to the season for Lincoln Park who had a blow-out loss to Whitney Young on Feb. 26. Antwon Jennings comes to Lincoln Park this year from the staff of Morgan Park under legendary coach Nick Irvin. Coach Jennings spent years under Coach Irvin including Morgan Park's two 3A state championships.

Nevertheless, the future is bright for the Lions who take on arch rival Lane Tech on Friday, March 5, at Lane.

Property tax time talk

Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas and ABC7 News will host "Black and Latino Houses Matter" on March 11, a phone bank to help Cook County homeowners find refunds, apply for property tax exemptions and avoid the Delinquent Property Tax Sale, Pappas said.

Those who may wish to participate should call 312-603-5105 between 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Now hiring for tree care, landscaping

Greencorps is now offering seven to nine months of employment and on-the-job training in ecological restoration, green infrastructure, tree care, and landscaping.

Training happens both in the classroom and in the field with the Chicago Park District, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and other project partners.

Graduates of the Greencorps program have gone on to work for major companies such as Cardno, Christy Webber, Safety Kleen and AES. Typical job titles include Landscape Maintenance Foreman, Restoration Technician, Driver, Groundskeeper, Pesticide Applicator, and Hazardous Material Technician.

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POLICE BEAT from p. 4

and CPD records. He then took the girl to a room where he offered her money for sex, tried to kiss her, and gave her his phone number, Murphy said.

McClore saw the girl again one week later when she and her parents returned to the doctor's office.

Once again, he took her to a room and offered her money to do sexual things, Murphy alleged. The girl initially allowed him to perform a sex act because she wanted money, but McClore then raped her while putting his hand around her neck and mouth, Murphy said.

McClore repeatedly told the girl that he is a sex addict during the attack and said she should just let him do it as she tried to push him off, according to Murphy.

The girl outcried to her parents on Dec. 5 and went to a counselor with her mother the next day. Both women called the number McClore allegedly gave to the victim and recorded their conversation with him.

McClore denied the sexual allegations during the call. Instead, he said, the girl sought him out because she wanted to have her parents murdered, and he has experience with such things, Murphy said.

The counselor contacted state authorities and Chicago police. Officers arrested McClore on March 2.

He told police that he knew the girl from his job at the doctor's office and again claimed she wanted to hire him to kill her parents, Murphy continued. Prosecutors charged him with criminal sexual assault by force and aggravated criminal sexual assault abuse.

McClore's attorney told Judge Ortiz that he moved from the city to Kankakee this year and said he now works for a popcorn factory in Chicago. He has 12 children and 45 grandchildren, the attorney said.

"Why a 61-year-old man who's a janitor at a doctor's office would provide a 14-year-old with a phone number is beyond me," Ortiz said after hearing the state's allegations.

She ordered McClore to go on electronic monitoring if he can post a \$75,000 deposit bond to get out of jail.

—Compiled by CWBChicago.com

RATES from p. 5

Millions of American families took advantage of the record low rates in the fourth quarter of 2020, according to the U.S. Residential Property Mortgage Origination Report.

Some 3.51 million home and 2-to-4-flat apartment mortgages were originated in the quarter, up 48% from the fourth quarter of 2019. A total of 2.23 million of the loans valued at \$666.8 billion were rolled over in refinance action.

For more housing news, visit www.dondebat.biz. Don DeBat is co-author of "Escaping Condo Jail," the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit www.escapingcondojail.com.



Mrs. Florence Jones-Smith



Todd A. Smith



Maggie Baczkowski and Curt Rose.



Josie Falbo



Sam Sanchez



Guernica tapestry formerly at U.N.

SEEKING from p. 2

annual meeting, the Illinois Restaurant Assoc. announced **Sam Sanchez** as the newly elected Chairman of the Board. He is the Founder and CEO of Third Coast Hospitality Group, and most recently served as the IRA's First Vice Chairman. In the mid-1980s, Sanchez moved from his family's hometown in Sabinas Hidalgo, Mexico, to start what is now an accomplished hospitality career on the North Side. First came his signature John Barleycorn Memorial Pubs in Lincoln Park and Lakeview, then with his extensive knowledge of all things restaurant-related as the principal partner overseeing operations for Moe's Cantina, Old Crow Smokehouse, and Tree House, with other concepts on the horizon. Sanchez owns EMC Construction, and in June 2020, he founded SDS Blocker Manufacturing, a company producing high quality disposable face masks. Involved in civic, charitable, and mentorship activities, Sam is highly regarded as a community leader and was named IRA's Restaurateur of the Year in 2015.

#2 IS GOOD: Long-time Lincoln Park resident, personal injury lawyer **Todd A. Smith** has been selected by his peers (94,000 Illinois lawyers) as the #2 top lawyer in all categories, according to Illinois Super Lawyers magazine in its 2021 edition. Keep his number in your wallet.

BEGORRAH: Who done it? Chicago writer **Barbara Crocker** has just published her second murder mystery novel, "The Golden Horseshoes Murders," available on Amazon under the penname Babs L. Murphy. "Murder at Duffy Hall Castle" was her first book. Crocker says, "I dedicated the second book to my dear

husband, **Don Crocker** who died in February, who encouraged me so much."

U.N. TAPESTRY REMOVED: Guernica Adios. After Spanish painter **Pablo Picasso** created his most controversial masterpiece, "Guernica," displaying the horror of Nazi atrocities and Spain's compliance with war against Spanish civilians, the painting enjoyed a summer of artistic fame at the World's Fair in Paris in 1937. Afterwards the painting, plus 300 other Picasso works, wound up in the collection of Museum of Modern Art in NYC for the next 30 years. The painter's precautionary will insisted the works remain in the safety of New York until Spain had a democratic government. A tapestry was later woven by **Atelier J. de la Baume-Durrbach** in 1955, bringing the image once more to life. Owned by the **Rockefeller Family**, who provided the land for the U.N., it later landed at the United Nations where it soon meshed into the fabric of everyday life. Picasso's other treasures are now housed in Madrid. The tapestry was returned to **Nelson A. Rockefeller, Jr.**, the owner of the 'Guernica' tapestry, earlier this month. It is missed.

THAT FALBO STYLE: When you can't stop listening to a CD because it resonates with every fiber of your being, that's when you know you've just heard something very special. Chicago singer, **Josie Falbo**, sets the Jazz bar high with her new album, "You Must Believe in Spring," recorded at Southport Records. Sharing this rarified air with her is a breathtaking 50-piece orchestra - led by arranger, producer **Carey Deadman** and engineered by **Jim Massoth**.

THE MAGGIE AND CURT SHOW: Just had the time of my life on the new "Maggie and Curt Show," the new culture oriented talkfest that **Maggie Baczkowski** and former RL barman/funnyman **Curt Rose** have hacksawed together. They are funny, fresh, sassy and creative. I was thrilled to be an early guest, as was Gibson's **Johnny Coletti**. Look for the Switching Gears podcast at www.mbluxurygroup.com.

CHURCH WOMAN: Of high fashion, **Florence Jones-Smith**,

known for her hats, fine baking and social media following, dead at 94. Her online fashion fans came late in life as an octogenarian after her famed son, hairdresser **Leigh Jones**, published her elegant church ensembles. She was always the best dressed in the room whenever I saw her sweet face. And she was a devoted friend of **Dori Wilson's**. In fact, Dori had just attended Mrs Jones-Smith's funeral on the day our Dori left us. **Maya Angelou** wrote about Mrs. Jones-Smith in the forward to "Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats."

FAB NITE OUT: **Barb Bailey** with **Chad Willetts** celebrating life at Le Piano with **Irene Michaels** and **Arny Granat**; **Amy Samuelson** (Happy Birthday) her beautiful mother **Judy Samuelson** and her friend, **Len**. Thank you, Chad for supporting live music in Chicago and what wonderful music it is. With **Damian Espinosa**, **Stacey McMichael**, **Nicholas Kaplan** life is good, even in pandemic.

WHO'S WHERE: **Mark Olley** in Hollywood... Chicagoan **Gillian Anderson** picked up a Golden Globe for playing Mrs. Thatcher in The Crown... **Joakim Noah** being honest saying he wants to end his 13 year NBA career back on the Bulls... **Curt Rose** and **Maggie Baczkowski** at Italia for their TV show... **Thad Wong** all Blackhawked up with son, **Palmer Wong**, at UC... **Wynnis Mackie**, **Melissa Babcock**, **Sherrill Bodine** and **Bobby Panter** at Ralph Lauren Bar and Grill... **Nikki Friar** stirs up some cozy magic at Marchesa... the **Hindmans** of Hinsdale celebrating mom's 90th birthday ... Gibson's Steakhouse was the scene for artist **Rosemary Fantti's** birthday with **Dayle D Anne Edgeworth** and **Barb Bailey**... **Sam Skinner** and **Honey Jacobs Skinner** have more than a bee in their bonnet making life safe for our pets... **Janet Owen** thrilled and honored to be on the cover of the current Chicago Agent Magazine. Tres chic.

With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet, you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street. - **Dr. Seuss** botg515@gmail.com

North Township Real Estate For Sale**Real Estate For Sale**

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-v-

LAKE POINT TOWER RENAISSANCE PLAZA, LLC F/K/A LAKE POINT TOWER COMMERCIAL, LLC, AN ILLINOIS LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY, LAKE POINT TOWER CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION, AN ILLINOIS NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION, EVANGELINE GOULETAS, AN INDIVIDUAL, A. ROBERT ABOUD AND COMPANY, AN ILLINOIS CORPORATION, UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS Defendants

2019 CH 00969
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CHICAGO, IL 60611
NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on November 30, 2020, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 10:30 AM on April 1, 2021, at The Judicial Sales Corporation, One South Wacker Drive, CHICAGO, IL, 60606, sell at a public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:
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Property Index No. 17-10-214-058
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The real estate is improved with a condominium. The judgment amount was \$928,817.65.

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PAINTING

FATE from p. 1

zations now utilize virtual-only meetings exclusively as the new version of ‘public notice’ community meetings, when they are hardly that.

Among the statues on the chopping block is a prominent statue of the 15th Century Italian-born explorer, Christopher Columbus. Removed by the city last summer, after it was threatened for destruction by militant left-wing activists, the Columbus statue remains in storage.

Columbus is not the only one whose statue has been threatened with removal. Also targeted for removal are statues of President Abraham Lincoln and Union Civil War General John Logan.

“Due to recent protests, in part concerning the Christopher Columbus sculpture in Grant Park, the City of Chicago created a Chicago Monuments Project Advisory Committee [CMP]. This committee was created to “review the City’s collection of monuments and recommend solutions.” Out of a collection of over 500 public pieces, the CMP has identified 41 for public discussion. Of the 41, four are or were in Grant Park - the Seated Lincoln, the General John Logan Monument, the Indians (The Bowman and the Spearman) and the Columbus sculpture [that was] removed last year,” according to a statement posted by GPAC.

Seemingly, the advisory council has al-

ready made its decision about whether the statue of Christopher Columbus should be re-installed or permanently removed.

“The GPAC’s Committee on Art, Monuments & Markers reviewed the Columbus sculpture last year and has now initiated a review of the additional three monuments to provide an advisory recommendation to the Council,” explained the GPAC in its written statement.

According to GPAC officials, their review process will allow the public “to provide an advisory recommendation specifically on these three monuments. In its principles for review, the committee recognizes that any discussion must include an historical analysis, a review of reasons for the initial installation of the sculpture and consider current ideas of equity and justice.”

Ordinarily, this process would include written recommendations and public testimony. However, due to the pandemic, oral comments will be restricted to Zoom.

One now-retired alderman had told this newspaper the recent reliance on virtual meetings has especially hurt senior citizens, a group which often is among the most informed and most vocal at public meetings. To those who have attended public meetings on a regular basis, the terms described by GPAC may be a shock.

“If one wishes to make an oral presentation, after registering to attend the meeting, one also will need to register to present,

prior to March 17, with Jim Wales at vpgpacchicago@gmail.com. Registration to attend as well as present will be limited and will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis. Presentations are limited to two minutes. Groups are asked to appoint a spokesperson to make their oral presentation. At this time, plans are underway to livestream the meeting as well. Written comments can be submitted from March 4-17, by submission to vpgpacchicago@gmail.com,” according to a written statement from the park’s advisory council.

While no decisions have been announced, there are indications these decisions have already been made and the shortened comment period will help generate a desired result.

“The Committee will review all comments prior to making its written recommendation to the GPAC by March 28. There may be a majority and minority recommendations. The potential recommendations run the spectrum from allowing the monuments to remain with no additional action; provide new or additional context; relocate to another Park District site or long-term loan to cultural organizations, museums or relevant historical, cultural, or educational settings; removal, whether temporary or permanent,” say GPAC officials.

GPAC officials added they will vote on the recommendation of its committee and will pass along its own recommendation to the Chicago Park District [CPD] and the

CMP.

GPAC was organized under CPD rules to make recommendations concerning Grant Park. Leslie Recht is President of the Council. In June 2020, the Council created its Committee on Art, Monuments & Markers to make recommendations to the Council concerning existing or proposed art, monuments or markers in Grant Park. This Committee is chaired by the Vice President of the Council, Jim Wales, and it is composed of individuals with expertise in the arts, history, cultural affairs and also members of the Council.

An advisory council is a voluntary group of individuals who meet on a regular basis to support the effective functioning of their local park. Councils promote ways for the community to better utilize the CPD’s programs and facilities; provide communication to the CPD on matters relating to their parks; increase community awareness of CPD projects; provide the community with a vehicle through which park information can be shared; and assist in locating alternate funding sources to enhance park facilities.

Park Advisory Councils represent more than 225 parks in all 77 community areas across the City of Chicago. Park district officials describe park advisory councils as the community voice for their neighborhood park, children’s playground, beach or natural area.

SAID from p. 1

visory Committee [CMP] would begin “an inclusive and democratic public dialog” about the future of Chicago’s internationally known public art collection.

But during its first six months of work, the committee’s deliberations were kept secret. In fact, the mayor’s monuments committee was designed that way.

“What’s said here, stays here,” is a message city officials delivered to the committee members at their Oct. 14 meeting, according to a slim, 24-page packet of committee agendas and minutes records City Hall released to the Better Government Association [BGA].

The committee is tasked with identifying any public monuments linked to white supremacy and injustice that “warrant attention” and could be removed. It ultimately flagged 41 problematic artworks, including statues of Columbus as well as Presidents Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant and William McKinley.

But despite Lightfoot’s transparency pledge, there was no public notice of the committee’s six meetings, no record which 30 committee members attended or any details about what they recommended during roughly 12 hours of online deliberations.

The public had no opportunity to observe or offer any input at the private meetings — none of which were recorded in audio or video form, Chicago Dept. of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Communications Director Christine Carrino said.

“The CMP advisory committee is not a ‘public body’ and therefore the [Open Meetings] Act’s requirements do not apply to it,” Carrino told the BGA in a statement, explaining the city’s refusal to release committee recommendations and reports, attendance rosters and any recordings of its first six meetings.

Given the intense civic interest surrounding Chicago’s public art, Lightfoot could have provided public access, said Benjamin Silver, an attorney for the Citizen Advocacy Center, a nonpartisan watchdog organization based in DuPage County.

“Even if they are not subject to the Open Meetings Act, there is the question of voluntary transparency, especially with something like this,” he said. “They have now flagged 41 monuments. And whether anyone agrees or disagrees with those choices,

I think there is a public interest in knowing how they reached that decision.”

“With closed meetings, it’s not possible to do that,” Silver added. “It’s for the city to answer why they would want to do this behind closed doors.”

Public input phase begins

Carrino said the process has now entered a new phase seeking public participation.

On Feb. 17, the city unveiled a web page at <https://chicagomonuments.org/> encouraging visitors to “share your thoughts.” It asks citizens to fill out an online feedback form, or post on social media.

The web page also links to a “speaker series” of webinars by committee members and to a schedule of “Drop-in Conversations” at which “Chicagoans are invited to pre-register to participate in a one-hour discussion with CMP Committee Members.”

There, the city website says, “you can ask questions, share your thoughts, and learn more about the CMP.”

“The project has now moved into the public engagement phase, holding online conversations and encouraging feedback from all Chicagoans on these and other monuments under the city’s management,” Carrino said in her statement. “The committee has suggested a list of monuments for further conversations, but no recommendations have been made regarding any of them.”

Records provided by the city in response to the BGA’s request suggest the list of 41 problematic monuments was provided by Lightfoot administration officials — and not generated by the artists and cultural figures on the advisory committee. “From a basic list of approximately 500 outdoor objects, we’ve identified over 40,” city administrators told committee members at their second Zoom meeting on Oct. 1.

Carrino said City Hall staff “did the initial assessment to make sense of the material.”

The staff assessment then went to the three committee co-chairs: cultural affairs commissioner Mark Kelly, Landmarks Illinois CEO Bonnie McDonald and museum curator Jennifer Scott.

After that, the list of problematic monuments went to the entire advisory committee, which was asked “to workshop” the examples, Carrino said.

From there, “adjustments were made and additional artworks were added based on staff and committee input before the information was made available to the public,” Carrino said.

A Lightfoot press release and the committee minutes state the committee members would make recommendations and produce a “Final Report” with “documentation of the process and [their] recommendations.”

But in its FOIA response to the BGA, City Hall said there was no such final report or documentation of recommendations.

Lightfoot formed her public monuments advisory committee as she was coming under fire for separate alleged violations of Illinois’ Open Meetings Act.

In June 2020, the BGA filed a lawsuit alleging the City Council violated the Open Meetings Act during COVID-19 telephone briefings with Lightfoot. The city contested the BGA claim but Lightfoot committed to no longer hold additional meetings outside of public view. The BGA lawsuit is pending.

A month before that suit was filed, the news organization ProPublica Illinois filed a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General’s office over Lightfoot conference calls with the City Council to discuss the pandemic. The attorney general upheld that complaint in September.

In both cases, Lightfoot’s administration denies it violated the law.

During nationwide protests over police use of force after George Floyd died in Minneapolis police custody, Lightfoot initially resisted calls to take down Chicago’s Columbus statues, saying they should stand as teaching tools.

“I think that the way we educate our young people, in particular, about their history is to educate them about the full history,” Lightfoot said on June 18.

But after Chicago’s Columbus statue demonstrations frayed into violent encounter with protesters attacking police, and Lightfoot’s home became a rallying site in July, Lightfoot ordered the middle-of-the-night removal of Columbus statues from Grant and Arrigo parks, then from a third site on the Southeast Side.

“This step is about an effort to protect public safety and to preserve a safe space for an inclusive and democratic public dia-

logue about our city’s symbols,” Lightfoot said at the time.

Lightfoot then announced the CMP as “a formal process to assess the monuments, memorials, and murals across Chicago’s communities, and develop a framework for a public dialogue to determine how we evaluate our city’s history and diversity.”

She called the committee “a vehicle to address the hard truths of Chicago’s racial history.”

‘These conversations ... can be painful’

Illinois’ Open Meetings Act guarantees citizen access to “all meetings at which any business of public body is discussed or acted upon in any way,” except under limited and specific circumstances.

Under the act, a “meeting” can include “any gathering, whether in person or by video or audio conference, telephone call, electronic means (such as, without limitation, electronic mail, electronic chat, and instant messaging), or other means of contemporaneous interactive communication.”

A 1997 Illinois Appellate Court opinion known as Board of Regents v. Reynard ruled that committees created to advise a government body are considered a public body for purposes of the Open Meetings Act.

Silver and other attorneys said it can be challenging to prove in court that an advisory committee qualifies as a public body. Compliance with the law hinges on how the members were appointed and what decision-making authority they were given, among other questions.

Committee member Cesáreo Moreno, the Visual Arts Director of the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood, said he was glad the committee’s first six months of deliberations were private, so that members could share thoughts and emotions without having to worry about being misinterpreted.

“A lot of the topics that come up are deep, they’re private and they’re about your identity,” Moreno said. “These conversations are uncomfortable and can be painful for many people and certainly ignite responses from individuals that are emotional.”

But now the committee is on a new footing as it fields input from citizens and community leaders, he said. “We’re on the first step of a long journey.”