# THE OVERLOOK

*November 2026* *The official newsletter of the Fineview Citizens Council and Perry Hilltop Citizens Council* *No. 32*






*Staff members Casohn Peoples, Callie DiSabato, and Carla Arnold during Trunk or Treating on October 28 at the Pittssburgh Project. (Photo by Diondré Johnson)*

## Join us for our next two community gatherings!

Our November community gathering will be a pre-Thanksgiving potluck, on Tuesday, November 24, 6 p.m., at 439 Catoma St. in Fineview. We will be providing dinner, and we invite members to bring a dessert to share.

We will hear updates and ask questions of our Zone 1 police and elected officials, and discuss neighborhood issues with our staff and your fellow members.

If you will be driving to this meeting, please be mindful when parking; there is space available on Edenvale Street and Warren Street.

Please note that our December community gathering, which doubles as our annual Volunteer Appreciation Celebration, will take place at the Pittsburgh Project (2601 Norwood Ave.) on Tuesday, December 15, 6:30 p.m. – *before* our next newsletter.

See you soon!

## Winter shelter reopens on Maple Avenue

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) and the nonprofit Community Family Advocates (CFA) reopened the winter warming shelter at Northside Partnership Project, in the old McNaugher School at 2610 Maple Ave., on November 1, two weeks earlier than last year.

141 beds are available every night for single adults, as well as transportation to and from Downtown in the morning and evening. The shelter is closed during the day.

This season's winter shelter plan, which will run through April 15 next year, offers more than 600 beds for single adults, according to a press release from the county. This year's network of overflow shelters provides beds, meals, and support for physical and mental health. Other shelters will operate this winter at Second Avenue Commons, Downtown, and at the Salvation Army and the East End Cooperative Ministry in East Liberty.

In its first season, 2024-2025, the Maple Avenue shelter served about 900 unique individuals.

On November 12, the Zoning Board considered a request to establish a new, year-round overflow shelter in Polish Hill, to be operated by CFA, which may in future winters inherit the role that the shelter on Maple Avenue has played since 2024. The Zoning Board will issue a decision in this case in early 2027.

If neighbors face any issues involving the winter shelter, they are welcome to call our office at 412-444-8175.

## Committee Briefs

**Housing Working Group:** On November 2, we discussed the particulars of our recent $400k grant from the state for our work at 2610 Perrysville Ave., where we are collaborating with LaTeresa Blackwell on a future childcare center.

Our real estate partners, Rising Tides, appear to have hit a roadblock in their efforts to resolve a legal dispute over the mixed-use property at 2539 Perrysville Ave. The city mistakenly included the property in a Treasurer's Sale, at which sale Rising Tides successfully bid on the property; the previous owner has taken legal action to have the deed reverted. The HWG hopes for a speedy resolution through the courts, so that the visible damage to the building from a recent fire can be repaired.

We are still waiting on decisions from the Planning Commission, on short-term rental regulations, and the Zoning Board, on Urban Impact's planned renovation of the historic warehouse at 2731 N. Charles St.

We also discussed the reopening of the winter shelter at 2610 Maple Ave. on November 1 [see left].

**Mommy Maintenance Group:** Our staff worked with the MMG, the Housing Authority, the Allegheny Dwellings Tenant Council, and the Fineview Community Organization to throw a Halloween party at the Dwellings. We supplied decorations, costumes, and supplies for a painting activity. Five neighbors volunteered to help us decorate ahead of time. We had a well-attended party, and got to connect and reconnect with lots of neighbors.

**Step Challenge Committee, Gardening Club, Litter Brigade:** Pretty much dormant during the cold months!

*Interested in getting involved?*
*Email us:*
*info@ourfuturehilltop.org*

# Executive Director hiring process moving forward

By the time the application window for the next Executive Director of the Fineview and Perry Hilltop Citizens Councils closed on November 6, we had received 21 resumes from candidates.

Since then, our presidents, Diondré Johnson and Micki McDonough, have completed the first round of interviews.

They are reviewing their notes and expect to move three to five people to the next round. We anticipate that our boards will have selected a successor to our outgoing Executive Director, Rhonda Strozier, and that a transition will be underway by the end of this year.

# Upcoming holiday toy giveaway

We are preparing for our holiday giveaway. We will be able to distribute toys to children in Perry Hilltop and Fineview this year. Please contact outreach @ourfuturehilltop.org to learn more!

# Sign up now for the city's Snow Angels program

The city has begun accepting sign-ups for their Snow Angels program, which pairs willing and able volunteers with residents who need a little help clearing snow and ice from their porches, stoops, and sidewalks.

To get help from a Snow Angel this winter, you must be 62 or older, or have a physical disability, and you should not already have resources (financial or family and friends nearby) to deal with snow and ice.

You can sign up to request or volunteer by using the QR code links below, or by calling 311.

***Volunteer as a Snow Angel:***

***Request help from a Snow Angel:***

***Did you know that...***

- you live in the Zone 1 Public Safety district?
- you have an active Northside Zone 1 Public Safety Council?
- meetings are held on the 1st Thursday of most months at 6:00 pm., and that you can attend in person at the Mattress Factory (509 Jacksonia St.) or via Zoom?
- you can stay up to date by emailing us at zone1psc@gmail.com?
- you can anonymously report safety concerns by emailing zone1tips@pittsburgh.pa.gov?

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# Your Ad Here?

This month we began welcoming advertisers in The Overlook. Space is available for businesses based in Fineview or Perry Hilltop for $25/month.

*Interested? Email the editor: jhanrahan1501@gmail.com.*

# Real Estate Tracker

The following real estate transactions were recorded in the month of October:

**Fineview:** 1715 Meadville St., Benjamin Case to Abigail Malik, $210,000. Vacant land on Letsche St., Lillian Sayers and Ronald Glenn to Rebecca and Thomas Plunkett, $1. Vacant land on Edenvale St., Kate Luxemburg to Penn Pioneer Enterprises LLC, $1,500.

**Perry Hilltop:** 3 E. McIntyre Ave., Luxxe Life Bundles LLC to Portfolio AI 027 LLC, $296,000. 524 W. Burgess St., OGR Realty III LP to Joseph Dasilva, $110,500. 2720 Perrysville Ave., OGR Realty III LP to Initech LLC $120,000. Multiple vacant parcels on N. Charles Street, Brightridge Street, and Chautauqua Street, Northside Properties (as various LLCs) to Western Avenue Properties LLC.

## CONTRIBUTE TO THIS NEWSLETTER!

It takes some two thousand words and a few good photos to fill this monthly newsletter. Help us make it happen by submitting events for the community calendar, guest articles, photos, and suggestions to info@ourfuturehilltop.org.


## THE OVERLOOK

IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY **OUR FUTURE HILLTOP**, A PARTNERSHIP OF THE FINEVIEW CITIZENS COUNCIL AND THE PERRY HILLTOP CITIZENS COUNCIL.

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# This Month in Hilltop History: From Perry Hilltop to Pennsylvania Ave.

Jon Hanrahan, Secretary, Fineview Citizens Council

This one's about as slippery as stories get — basic facts elude me — but I'll do my best to do right by someone whose time as a resident of present-day Perry Hilltop was as extraordinary as it was brief.

* * *

She was identified in a variety of ways, her family name variously transcribed as Pockticet, Wappockiteet, or Wopocktiese, her given name being something like Muzzato or Mazzautti, if the papers can be trusted. (It was the 1880s; the papers could not always be trusted.)

I have seen only one document that I would usually trust as a source for a name — a marriage license — but there she provided a stage name, "Pocahontas," as her first name. Honestly, regrettably, I just don't know what I should call her.

She was described as being from Mexico, yet also as a daughter of a chief of the Tobas people, who lived in South America. One account places her birth in 1857, at sea between Mexico and New Orleans.

She was well-educated, studying first at a convent, later earning two degrees in medicine. She was bi- or tri-lingual, and a vivacious, animated talker.

After completing her medical training, she left home, in Vera Cruz, against her parents' wishes, essentially running away to join the circus. As the *Commercial Gazette* later put it, "She consented to travel on exhibition that she might broaden her knowledge of the world."

* * *

The dime museum at Sixth and Penn was booked solid all December, 1884: Jo-Jo the Dog-Faced Man. Little Baby Bell and Miss Lazerus, in song and dance. A player piano. A slide trombone. An Egyptian. Afghan warriors. Marionettes. Live animals. Minstrelsy. (The dime museum was perhaps the "slop" of its time.)

She took up a brief residency at the museum on December 23, billed as "Pocahontas," an "Indian Princess" descended from that most famous of Indian Princesses.

The next day, Christmas Eve, James F. McKeown, a confectioner from Lithgow Avenue in present-day Perry Hilltop, visited. "He was greatly taken with her," per the *Commercial Gazette*, calling upon her at her hotel twice daily. On New Year's Eve, she met the parents. On January 4, after a week-and-a-half romance, they were married.

They honeymooned in Minnesota, where she supposedly owned an 800-acre cattle ranch. (She is also supposed to have owned and collected rents from real estate in Vera Cruz.)

Despite any passive income rolling in, she went into business for herself in Allegheny, finally taking up her trade as "botanic doctress."

She attracted devotees and powerful enemies. The idea of a woman, an immigrant, with questionable credentials — "one of her diplomas in medicine had been lost and another one practically destroyed through an accident," according to the *Daily Post* — practicing plant-based medicine in their midst was anathema to Allegheny's established medical practitioners.



A PERSECUTED PRINCESS.

She Claims to Have Been Persistently Blackmiled.

THREATS MADE UPON HER LIFE.

The Victim Makes a Personal Appeal to the President for Protection—A Strange Story.

*Pittsburgh Daily Post, January 6, 1887.*

First there was the request to file her diplomas with the county; she had fresh copies mailed from Mexico and promptly delivered them Downtown.

Months later, someone sued her for practicing without a diploma. "Overtures were then made to her that the suits would be withdrawn if she would leave the city," reported the *Daily Post*. She refused to leave; a grand jury refused to take up the case.

Another accusation emerged that she had improperly written prescriptions. "The health of the Princess was delicate, and when three officers came to arrest her on the second charge she was sick in bed," wrote the *Daily Post*. The constable promised to make the whole thing go away, for $100. When she declined, her own doctor had to step in to prevent the police from dragging his patient away.

*Continued on page 4.*

## JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER BY MAIL!

As a member of the Fineview Citizens Council or Perry Hilltop Citizens Council, we will mail you this newsletter every month. We will keep you up to date on our organizations' activities, goings-on in our neighborhoods, and opportunities for you to get involved. You will also be eligible to cast your ballot in our annual board elections. If you attend at least one community meeting this year, you may run for election to our boards.

To join or renew, fill out this form and mail it along with the appropriate payment (check only, please) to our office at 2438 Wilson Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15214. **You can also join or renew on our website, ourfuturehilltop.org.** Memberships run from January through December. Your contributions to the organizations are tax-deductible.

Name(s):

Address:

Neighborhood / Zip:

Phone:

Email:

___ New Resident (first year) . . . . . $0

___ Financial hardship . . . . . $0

___ Individual . . . . . $5

___ Organization . . . . . $10

___ Household . . . . . $10

___ Business (non-voting) . . . . . $20

___ Non-resident (non-voting) . . . . . $10

___ Lifetime individual/household . . . . . $40

# "Botanic Doctress," continued...

Beyond her poor health, her life may have been in danger from her fellow Alleghenians: "The Princess has been receiving anonymous letters warning her that it was not safe for her to be out on the street," claimed the *Daily Post*. "Some of them have figures of coffins and skull and cross bones on them."

Finally, in November, 1886 — 140 years ago this month — she went all the way to Washington, D.C., to plead her case before President Grover Cleveland. His assurances, whatever they were, left her "confident she has little more to fear," per the *Daily Post*. She gave up her office in central Allegheny, resuming her practice at her home, "Willow Grove," between Lithgow Avenue and Federal Street Extension, where she reportedly saw some forty to sixty patients a day.

She died two years later, on November 12, 1888, at age 31, having spent only four years living in Allegheny.

Her widower, James, traveled the following month to Mexico to claim her estate; he does not appear to have been successful. He returned a month later, promising to resume his late wife's practice: "He knows all about the Indian medicines she was so successful with in treating patients," wrote the *Dispatch*. "Just as soon as he can be legally admitted to practice medicine he will try to cure people as she did."

Two years later, James was living in Kansas, freshly remarried to a Pottawatomie woman.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**COMMUNITY GATHERING + POTLUCK**
NOVEMBER 24, 6–8 P.M.
439 CATOMA ST.

**VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PARTY**
DECEMBER 15, 6:30–8:30 P.M.
2601 NORWOOD AVE.

**HOUSING WORKING GROUP**
JANUARY 4, 6–7:30 P.M.
ONLINE (CONTACT US FOR INFO)

**BOARD MEETING**
JANUARY 19, 6–8 P.M.
ONLINE (CONTACT US FOR INFO)

**COMMUNITY GATHERING**
JANUARY 26, 6–8 P.M.
LOCATION TBD

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



PHCC board member Renee Robinson [left] hands out candy with a neighbor during our annual Trunk or Treat at the Pittsburgh Project on October 28. (Photo by Diondré Johnson)

*Have a photo you'd like to share? Email us: info@ourfuturehilltop.org*

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