



## Noble Hill project fuels nature vs. development debate

By Mark Weber

Controversy over the Noble Hill housing development project in southwestern Eden Prairie detonated in 2021.

The reasons for the dispute are familiar to witnesses of other development battles in EP: proximity to treasured natural resources, engineering hurdles, questions over the need for more study, and a dose of Not in My Backyard (NIMBY). (See addl. EPLN reporting on the issue at <https://tinyurl.com/vf8sz62w>)

But the biggest reason seemed to be the question of whether nearby Fredrick-Miller Spring, a city-owned landmark that attracts people from throughout the metro area and beyond, would be compromised.

Opponents to Noble Hill said yes. The Eden Prairie City Council said no.

And so, unless opponents of the Noble Hill project convince an agency or court otherwise – a chapter of this story yet to be written – the Pulte Homes plan for 50 houses on 28 acres up the river bluffs from the spring seems poised for final council approval on July 13. This would likely lead to construction beginning later this year.

The climax of the months-long debate over Noble Hill was a city council public hearing on May 4. That meeting drew more than 60 speakers and lasted nearly five hours. It resulted in city council approval of the project on a 5-0 vote.

At the meeting, residents from Eden Prairie and beyond – including Belle Plaine, Blaine, Burnsville, Excelsior, Golden Valley, Hopkins, Jordan, Marine on St. Croix, Minneapolis, New Brighton, Rogers, Savage, Shakopee, Shorewood, Victoria, and Wayzata – implored the city to either deny approval or request further study.

They backed that up with a petition containing more than 3,200 signatures.

"The energy here is strong," said Emmett Dysart during the well-attended public hearing. "You know the right thing to do."

Others simply asked the council to take more time to either collect data or determine if the land might be purchased and preserved for public use. "I don't know what the rush is," said Theresa Shipp. "Why do we have to decide so quickly?"

On May 4, city council members said they're convinced the spring and Riley Creek will not be damaged by the development. They pointed to the fact that eight acres of the Noble Hill site nearest the creek and spring would be left undeveloped.

"This water will be pure and protected for decades to come," Mayor Ron Case said at the meeting. The May 4 approval also included the council's decision to not seek an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). The EAW is a detailed study further assessing the impacts of the project, including on the freshwater spring.

Opponents have appealed that decision to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, aided by a GoFundMe campaign for legal help that has raised more than \$11,600.

At this writing, the outcome of the appeal is uncertain.

SUBSCRIBE FREE to follow EPLN's ongoing coverage of this appeal at <https://bit.ly/2SDq9AS>



Opponents of the Noble Hill development packed city hall to testify at the May 4 city council hearing. - Photo by Jeff Strate

## EP catalytic converter thefts continue to rise

By Steve Schewe

As of June 15, the Eden Prairie Police report 60 of these thefts have taken place in 2021, vs. 55 in all of 2020.

"We've heard about these thefts from our members across the state," said Jeff Potts, executive director of the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association. "It's not just a metro area crime." (See EPLN's ongoing catalytic converter stories at [tinyurl.com/458av2cx](https://tinyurl.com/458av2cx))

One of the most recent thefts occurred in the parking lot of Eden Prairie's local food shelf, People Reaching Out to People (PROP).

"Catalytic converter thefts are driven by price increases of the precious metals inside," said Captain Bill Wyffels of the Eden Prairie Police. "Because there's money in it, multiple groups have become involved. It's difficult for vehicle owner victims. We want to make it right."

Wyffels noted that the Eden Prairie Police Department (EPPD) crime analysts work with surrounding agencies to detect patterns to support investigations.

Importantly, said Wyffels, citizens have a key role to play.

**"If you see someone duck down suspiciously under a car...don't hesitate to call us."**

– Captain Wyffels of the EPPC

"Federal statistics say 70% of property crimes are drug related," continued Wyffels.

See **CATALYTIC**, page 4

## Historian helped rediscover EP's past

By Stuart Sudak

When it came to uncovering Eden Prairie's past, Ernie Shuldhiess was quite the detective.

Sifting through old newspaper articles on 200 rolls of microfilm, the longtime Eden Prairie resident unearthed a treasure trove of historic anecdotes chronicling the city's early days.

The result of his labor? Two books authored by Shuldhiess on Eden Prairie history.

His first, *Eden Prairie Book of Days*, features a short nugget of Eden Prairie history for each of the 365 days of the year. Shuldhiess once described it as a whimsical account of Eden Prairie's history told in a light, coffee table style.



Longtime Eden Prairie resident Ernie Shuldhiess died in 2007 at 58. Photo credit Stuart Sudak

from pioneer children wading in Purgatory Creek to an artist caught adding his handiwork to Graffiti Bridge.

He handpicked the collection from about 1,400 photos he digitally archived for the Eden Prairie Historical Society.

See **SHULDHIESS**, page 3

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# EPLN: Shaking glitter from the American flag

By **Brad Canham**, Editor in Chief

Of the truths housed within the American heart are these words embraced by the Signers of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

In keeping with this sentiment for this Fourth of July, please shake the glitter off your American flag. In other words, for a day set aside easy opinions on patriotism which, like glitter, can serve as gaudy adornments and lack the solemnity which a unanimous excellence – aka Truth - demands.

Look past the fireworks, Facebook opinions - the glitter - and this July 4<sup>th</sup> peer deep into the fabric of American democracy.

As any parent knows, glitter, like an opinion, is easily thrown around. Moreover, the mutual enduring quality of both is the way they embed a lifeless distraction in whatever they touch. In doing so, the sparkling adornments distract from – and cheapen - the things they were meant to enhance. Moreover, the noise of “partisan patriotism” opinions have shot through everything over the past several years.

So much so it may be argued that opinions increasingly guide human behaviors - while knowledge is increasingly buried in the garbage-laden tsunami of raw data. Truth itself is merely used, but only as an *adornment* sprinkled into language, only for its ability to influence. In other words, truth is not valued for its own sake. Instead, truth is used - as propaganda.

The cynical mixing of opportunistic opinions with sprinklings of truth is a danger and risk to democracy. In the hands of a skilled speaker this two-faced rhetoric, notes American philosopher David Roach is “like magic...capable of insinuating itself into the human heart and working its will from afar.”

This July 4th shake the glitter out of the flag, so to speak, by giving less attention to social media, news talking heads, and conspiracy theories. Instead, look deeper into democracy by seeking out the facts on people and events shaping Eden Prairie by subscribing to the Eden Prairie Local News (EPLN).

Like a persistent echo of the Signers, the principles – truth, fairness, equality, and the like – held to by a group of individuals who’ve lifted Eden Prairie’s local news out of the ashes (See addl. on EPLN at <https://tinyurl.com/y463nun7>) takes the form of factual reporting in service to hyperlocal *knowledge*. This reporting, we assert, helps people make sense of the world based on facts, not opinions. In turn, this promotes the ‘common good’ (not the common conspiracy) by enabling individuals to coherently pursue their highest ideal expression of self within the community. EPLN’s ‘gift’ to Eden Prairie is to uplift the factual, and therefore *justified* true beliefs of the community. Its history, current rhythms, many voices, and future. We call this the Story of Us.

True courage, said Socrates, is an “endurance of the soul” combining the *knowledge* of the good hoped for and the evil feared in situations containing risk to oneself. At their most useful, opinions signal a *starting point* on a journey to knowledge, not the end point of knowledge. The personal risk and courage required to stomp a foot and blithely assert “it’s an opinion!” are minimal – mere glitter in the air. By contrast, the Signers used dialogue to formulate an enduring gift – a national Story of Us based on principles and facts.

With that in mind, this July 4<sup>th</sup> we also ask you to consider the courage of principle, facts, and dialogue more. Glittery opinions less. We ask you to join in the pursuit of something deeper than opinion - knowledge – here in Eden Prairie. We ask that you, as the Signers did 245 year ago, believe in dialogue and testing beliefs with facts until they are justified. Until they reveal “these Truths to be self-evident...” which they courageously signed with their names and their lives. Shake the flag and join EPLN’s pursuit of truth-based knowledge. Help ensure a coherent common good in support of fulsome lives here in Eden Prairie.

## School board’s Stoltz bids farewell to EP

By **James Bayer**

Veronica Stoltz laughs now at the memory of paying her filing fee to run for school board with a jar full of pennies. But she still believes that the “silly gesture” she admits that it was, reflected her reason for running.

“I wasn’t going to treat issues as broad and collective issues,” she said, “but the way they trickle down to the individual.”

Her own struggles to receive specialized services for her daughter ultimately drove her to seeking a spot on the district’s governing body.

“I think growth is born of struggle and that would be true for me in deciding to run for the school board,” she said a few weeks before her final meeting on May 24.

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When she was elected, she knew that she would likely not be a completely welcome presence for some.

“I stepped forward...anticipating that my dissatisfaction with the status quo would not be comfortable for everyone, but I feel like that is how we improve,” she said. “We don’t shy away from opportunities to develop and refine.”

### Arizona bound

Stoltz and her husband, Jon, who works for ShopHQ in Eden Prairie are heading to Arizona this summer to pursue new opportunities. The couple has four children: Spencer, 24, who attends Brigham Young University; Nathan, 21, who is completing a two-year mission experience in the Netherlands; Ryan, 16; and Katie, 12.

Stoltz, who works for a medical software company, says her youngest children are facing a difficult transition but are handling it well.

“They have very special relationships with their classmates and their teachers,” she said. “They’re being troopers and we know that they will develop new skills by adapting to a new environment and making new friends.”

### Reflecting

Paying her filing fee with pennies led to her election in November 2019. The school board had said it was planning for a special election this November to complete the remainder of Stoltz’s four-year term. Instead, on June 18, the board quickly installed Karla Bastrud.

Looking back at her experience on the board, Stoltz says she hopes one of her most important contributions is a sensitivity to listen to individual voices that represent a silent group of people less inclined to write a letter or attend a school board meeting.

“I don’t hear with ears that dismiss things as being singular issues,” she said. “I think of them as being an opportunity to probe and understand something that deserves more attention.”

At the same time, she encourages community members to participate.

“We need more people stepping forward to start a discussion about things that matter to them ... that impact them,” she said. “We have an amazing community and I would just like to hear from its more diverse voices more frequently.”

### Policy violations


Last November, Stoltz was found to be in violation of several school board policies during a meeting on Aug. 24, 2020, just before school was set to begin amidst the coronavirus pandemic. She eventually apologized for her actions. (See addl. EPLN school board stories <https://tinyurl.com/rx5awjrk>)

Stoltz thinks that casting her as the focal point of that meeting is a misrepresentation. “It’s missing the larger point of what 75-plus teachers, parents, and community members brought to that meeting to express,” she said.

“I’m far more concerned about the issues, the concerns and the opportunities.”

“I feel like some of the struggle that I’ve experienced is not in any way limited to that meeting ...,” she said.

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**STOLTZ**, continued from page 2

“I think it’s a mistake to shy away from the opportunity to hear from the people who are most engaged, most informed, and most able to educate,” she said. They know how to make “things run more smoothly, effectively, to improve overall student performance and experience.”

**Saying goodbye**

“I sincerely appreciate as a mother the ways in which my kids have been enhanced because I’ve had the privilege of raising them in Eden Prairie,” Stoltz said.

“I have kind neighbors who have been safe places for my kids to go ... I’ve had teachers who were interested in my kids that far outreached the walls of the classroom.”

She said she has experienced exceptional moments in the community, including when a cafeteria worker her son “just adored” attended his graduation party.

“I love that,” she said. “I love that our community has developed favorite bus drivers that they look forward to seeing every single day and that are warm and caring and concerned about them as individuals.”

Replacing those people in her family’s lives is a daunting prospect, she said.

“All of those people have been instrumental in my greatest work, which is being a mom,” she said.

“It’s been a long journey for our family and I just want to make sure that people know that is really a big part of what will make rolling out of our driveway for the last time really hard.”

**Making the post-pandemic rounds in EP**

By **Jeff Strate**

On a street corner in Eden Prairie’s wooded north-central area, a cardboard sign promises ‘LEMON AID’. Boys are playing hoops in Edenvale Park. An arched shot hits a perfect two-pointer. The Covid-19 protocols are lifting. Normal feels, almost, normal.

Pizza is normal.

Chalet Pizza, a small-business victim of urban renewal in Hopkins, as well as Gina Maria’s Pizza, have survived the pandemic. Both handle takeout and delivery orders a mile apart on Valley View Road. The latter is run by a family named Olson. New York Italian pies courtesy of Norski-Americans.

At Menard’s on Saturday, the garden supply section is the size of Vermont. Inside are folks in need of dirt therapy. One desperate gent pushes a cart filled with sod rolls.

Amidst the canyons of merchandise, the search for the mythical gaskets begins. It is said they prevent spray from jetting out from a garden hose outlet. An aisle clerk points to “Plumbing” on the second level. Another clerk winds a quarter-mile not towards gaskets, but towards “rubber washers”.

*There are exactly one bazillion items at Menards.* Eventually, check-out involves a packet of 10, quarter-sized rubber washers, cost \$2.48. Menards now holds one bazillion minus one... or 10? They’re made in China. Hose leak and thirsty lawn issues solved - courtesy of international trade agreements.

On Summerhill Drive, kids are yelping while running through sprinklers to the sound of wiffleball “bonks!”



Pioneer children circa 1890 to 1900 cool off in Purgatory Creek near Pioneer Trail after a Presbyterian Church picnic. The photo is one of many featured in the book, *Picture This Eden Prairie*. – Photo courtesy of the Eden Prairie Historical Society

**SHULDHISS**, continued from page 1

“He loved Eden Prairie’s history,” said Kathie Case, president of the Eden Prairie Historical Society. “He loved the early people. He cared a lot about the people.”

**A natural storyteller**

After finishing *Eden Prairie Book of Days* in 2003, Shuldhiess invited me to his house on Lake Riley. Our conversation was the basis for an *Eden Prairie News* article I wrote publicizing the book.

Shuldhiess was neither a writer nor a historian by trade. (He had worked in electronics). But he could spin a yarn with a thrill for drama and a historian’s eye for detail.

For instance, he noted that he still had a paper he wrote on local history for his Eden Prairie High School English class. Shuldhiess graduated in 1966.

“I got a B-plus,” he boasted.

Some entries in his first book are funny (March 5, 1968: “While hauling a manure spreader, Lawrence “Shooty” Shutrop is hit by a CNW train at the Riley Lake crossing. Shooty and the tractor were OK, but there was you know what all over the place”).

Others are sad (August 14, 1864: “John McClay is wounded in Civil War, reported missing in action, never returned to Eden Prairie”).

“I’m a storyteller, as you can tell, right?” Shuldhiess said then. “I’ve learned in life you’ve got to have a sense of humor to survive.”

**Honoring his legacy**

Besides writing two books and electronically archiving photos, Shuldhiess created the Historical Society’s first website. Both of Ernie Shuldhiess’s books are available for purchase through the Eden Prairie Historical Society.

“If you got to our (current) website ([edenprairiehistory.org](http://edenprairiehistory.org)), we have a dedication to him,” Case said. “We told his family that we would always have the website dedicated to Ernie in honor of him starting it.”

A park bench at Riley Lake Park honors his memory with a small plaque. It is in the general vicinity of where his house and his parents’ house once stood.

“We also thought it would be important to dedicate a bench to Ernie down at Riley because he loved it there,” Case said.

“Every morning, he would sit there and feed the squirrels. He did have a pretty great spot.”

*For more Eden Prairie history, visit the Historical Society museum, EP City Center, 8080 Mitchell Road, Mondays 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. or by appointment at 952.949.8580.*

**POST-PANDEMIC ROUNDS**, continued

Last year strangers walked their dogs, jogged, or rode their bikes on the neighborhood’s street loop. Greetings and “How’s it going?s” were heartfelt, leading to friendly chats. Those chats didn’t need a laptop or Zoom password. This spring, in-person street encounters are less frequent. People are back in their cars.

Cigar Jones, a Minnetonka smoke shop/lounge is operated by Todd, a fellow Eden Prairian. His cave and humidor serve as a retreat of sorts for a number of Prairie guys. A few weeks back it staged a golf event at the Bent Creek Course, a ten-minute jog from our neighborhood. Todd was absent, but the brother bear at the cash register growled, “Hey Jeff. How ya doing?” It’s good to be king - one without a mask.

Wednesday evening is the meet-up with Steve and Beryl at their annual, Bluestem Lane block party in southeast Eden Prairie. Steve is handing out watermelon slices. They are middle-aged cheerleaders in this multi-generational, southeast EP neighborhood. A gourmet food truck is selling pasties, kids are playing games on a front lawn. A dozen new best friends.

This is the new norm. At noon Thursday there’s a meet-up with Tom Brouellet from Spring Park at a Round Lake baseball field. He’s in the West Metro Senior Softball League playing for the MoJos. Some of the players are in their 80s, he says.

Tom steps to the plate. He takes a couple of swings at a big white sphere before grounding out to the second baseman. Melodramatic cat calls and laughs prompt his bold smile.

The old boys of summer on a Round Lake diamond. Normal?

Well...normal enough.





# EPHS athletics navigate 2020-21 school year, positive future ahead

**Athletes see ups and downs of pandemic-stricken school year**



Batchelder's winning goal in overtime during the 2020 Eden Prairie boys hockey championship.

By Ryan Williamson

A high school sports season is broken up into three parts: fall, winter, and spring.

This past school year, each one of these seasons proved to be much different. However, all of them manage to explain just how odd this past year was for sports, including at Eden Prairie High School.

**Fall**

It's safe to say expectations are always high for the Eden Prairie football team these days.

In 2019, EP suffered two losses in the regular season for the first time since 2012. Then, the Eagles failed to get past the round of 16 in the Class 6A playoffs.

A year later, the Eagles passed every test in front of them in 2020. Mike Grant led a squad that went unbeaten in 2020.

But unfortunately for all fall sports teams in Minnesota, they never saw their state championship dreams come to fruition. Due to the pandemic, EP's run ended in the section championship where the Eagles defeated Prior Lake 21-7.

Despite the loss, things look bright for EP as it appears Grant is back to producing state-championship worthy teams.

**Winter**

After winning state championships in 2009 and 2011, the EP boys' hockey team became a perennial contender in high school hockey.

However, the Eagles had yet to add to their title haul for nearly a decade. That included consecutive state final losses in 2019 and 2020.



Carter Batchelder (c) celebrates the Eden Prairie 2020 state boys' hockey tournament championship win at the Xcel Energy Center.

With a core group of seniors, EP responded with another stellar season. The Eagles captured a conference and section championship.

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In the state tournament, EP defeated Maple Grove in overtime to advance to the state final. Playing in front of a smaller crowd due to COVID, the Eagles did it again in the final against Lakeville South as Jackson Blake scored the game-winner for EP.


Much like the 2011 team, this group of Eagles was led by a core of seniors. This means that a new group will be charged with keeping up the current run of success the program is having.

**Spring**

Brooke Jones had to wait more than a year to start her run as head coach of the EP girls' lacrosse team as the 2020 season was canceled due to the pandemic.

Once her first season started in 2021, she and the rest of the team saw their competition get much tougher. The Eagles struggled compared to previous seasons and fell to opponents such as Edina and Minnetonka for the first time.

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With a record around .500 heading into the postseason, EP stunned Minnetonka and top-seeded Chanhassen to reach the state tournament.

At state, the Eagles fell to Benilde-St. Margaret's, 13-10. It was the first time ever EP failed to reach the semifinals.

It appears that the once powerful Eagles girls' lacrosse team now has a much tougher road to a state championship. However, a young coach such as Jones may be the person who may be up to the challenge.

## Two major SWLRT projects ongoing in EP

Construction continues at the SouthWest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) station in Eden Prairie with ongoing piling and concrete work.

Prairie Center Drive has crews completing roadwork, and sidewalk restoration. Sidewalks near Prairie Center Drive and Technology Drive remain closed.

Southbound lane closures are expected on Prairie Center Drive and Technology Drive into July 2021.

SWLRT bridge construction over Hwy. 494 parallel to Shady Oak Road is nearing completion.

CATALYTIC, continued from page 1

The thieves are likely the start of a multi-step distribution process that recycles stolen parts back to junkyards and repair shops, or to Internet sites like E-bay, Facebook Marketplace, or Craigslist.

"Repair shops may not even know that replacement converters they buy may have been stolen. Suppliers are reaping most of the profits. We have to make distribution of stolen parts harder."

**Special session provisions**

As this edition went to press, the Legislature was voting on the Commerce Omnibus bill, which contained two provisions to deter and disrupt illegal distribution:

- Anyone who purchases or receives a catalytic converter will be required to record any numbers, bar codes, or unique markings and the name of the person who removed it.
- The Commerce Department will design and implement a \$400,000 pilot program to place unique ID numbers on catalytic converters.

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Law enforcement and sponsors of anti-theft legislation agree that these provisions are a good start. "It's a small step forward, but it's not what we're hoping for," said Potts.

"The Commerce Department funds prevention programs, but they don't have the authority to create stiffer penalties, which we believe would help deter these crimes," according to Potts.

Most catalytic converters do not have serial numbers, making it difficult for law enforcement to prove a catalytic converter is stolen. Having manufacturers etch unique ID numbers at the factory would be ideal, said Potts. Currently, that's a heavy lift for manufacturers, he noted. "So we have to start at the local level."

"Senator Marty's bill, which I co-sponsored, would have put the bad guys out of business," said Senator Steve Cwodzinski. "On the other hand, a lot of people I hear from are concerned about over-regulation of businesses."

Cwodzinski said the gap may close in early 2022 following policy discussions to include hearing from victims like the PROP shop.

"Catalytic converter theft is a big deal ... if you get up to go to work in the morning and your vehicle isn't drivable," said Potts. He noted it hasn't made the "hot list of public safety initiatives yet" and redeploying resources from other priorities like violent crime is a challenge.

In the meantime, vehicle owners can help prevent theft by parking in well-lit areas, near building entrances, or close to the nearest access road when parking in a public lot.

The I-494 off-ramp to Flying Cloud Drive will remain closed for the summer as that road is reconstructed and LRT track is installed.

Traffic on Flying Cloud Drive is reduced to one lane in both directions in from Town Center Place to Valley View Road with intermittent interruptions expected on Flying Cloud Drive to Technology Drive and Viking Drive through the summer.

The closed on-ramp to eastbound Hwy 212 from Shady Oak is expected to reopen in late June with that juncture's westbound off-ramp closed into the Fall. (See ongoing EPLN SWLRT coverage <https://tinyurl.com/bmkc9k89>)