



POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF GRAND RAPIDS

April 2020

PHS Board Changes, Upcoming Elections in May



(From left) John Theisen, visiting artist Lenny Gomulka, Adam Porczynski. (Seated) Greg Rosloniec

By Matthew Gryczan

The board of the Polish Heritage Society went through several changes last week when President Greg Rosloniec resigned from the position he has held since June to spend more time with his family.

Among his final actions as president, Rosloniec appointed First Vice President Adam Porczynski to the position as president for the remainder of his term and ap-

pointed Second Vice President John Theisen to the position of First Vice President for the remainder of Porczynski's term. Both Porczynski and Theisen will serve in their new positions until June 1, 2021.

Rosloniec also convened a meeting of the society's Nominating Committee last week to submit a slate of names of individuals who will be on the ballot for the upcoming May 18 election of officers. (See page 2)

Polish/Lithuanian Halls in Grand Rapids React to COVID-19

By Matthew Gryczan

Volunteers at Knights of St. Casimir Aid Society were preparing hundreds of pounds of food for the club's popular St. Patrick Day's dinner when they were body slammed by shocking news – their doors were ordered closed immediately by state and local authorities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Like the 13 other Polish and Lithuanian halls throughout Grand Rapids, St. Casimir was not allowed to serve food inside to people as of 3 p.m. March 16 – just one day before its scheduled St. Patrick Day festivities.

With pluck and some good social media work, St. Casi-

mir – commonly called 6th Street Hall – dodged a huge loss on its corned beef and cabbage dinners by offering free drive-through service and lunch delivery for a \$2 fee.

But it's clear that all of the Grand Rapids halls with a combined membership of more than 5,000 people are already feeling the economic aftershocks of Michigan's stay-at-home orders. Hall rentals for wedding receptions and anniversary parties have evaporated, and volunteer-led fundraisers such as Breakfast with the Easter bunny and burger nights have been cancelled.

"The halls are conservative with their finances and

have some savings, so they should be okay in the short run," said Michelle Kershner, chairwoman of the Pulaski Days Committee, the umbrella organization that oversees festivities at

all the halls during the first weekend of October. "But they are fraternal organizations supported by their members, so this is going to be a tough year. (See Page 2)



Breakfast with the Easter Bunny was cancelled this year at Polish Falcons due to COVID-19

POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY

Board Changes: New President, First Vice President

The members of the Nominating Committee were Rosloniec, Recording Secretary Dennis Ziomkowski and former board president Marilyn Lignell.

The Nominating Committee announced that the following individuals are running for re-election to their current posts for 2-year terms starting June 1: Mary Ann Bergiven, Treasurer; Elena Chaidez, Corresponding Secretary; and Michael Jasperse, Director. The committee submitted the names of Teresa Bonham to fill the open seat as Second Vice President and Rosloniec to fill an open seat as Director.

Active members of the society can challenge any of

the individuals running for office by submitting the names of 25 active members who support their nominations. Individuals interested in running for an open position must submit the list of 25 supporters to Ziomkowski by April 31. Active members are members who are current with annual dues or who have lifetime memberships.

Those interested in running for a post on the board can obtain more information by writing to Ziomkowski at dziomkow@att.net.

Rosloniec said he was honored to serve as society president for the past year, but learned that the post required significant commitments that he wasn't able to meet without taking

time away from his grandchildren and other family members.

He added that the society is fortunate to have Porczynski assume the duties of president and Theisen become First Vice President because both men have distinguished themselves for years as tireless volunteers for the annual Dozynki Polish Festival, the major fundraiser for the society. Both Porczynski and Theisen have been named Citizens of the Year by the society for their efforts.

Bergiven, Chaidez and Jasperse have served on the board in their positions for several years. Bonham is vice president of the Pulaski Days Committee, recording secretary for the Ladies

Auxiliary of the Polish Falcons Aid Society and a volunteer for years at the Dozynki festival. A long-time member of the Grandville Athletic Booster club, Bonham is relationship manager at Serra Honda auto dealership in Grandville. She is interested in serving on the board to help share Polish culture in metro Grand Rapids.



Teresa Bonham

Polish Halls: "They have ongoing expenses."

"They probably are all showing lost revenue for March, April and May from their hall rentals, and usage by members will probably be near zero. At the same time, they have ongoing expenses."



Michelle Kershner

Kershner said she is encouraging eligible clubs to seek loans under the Paycheck Protection Program of the Small Business Administration because many of the halls have at least one full-time employee. According to its [website](#), the SBA will forgive loans if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities.

If Michigan's stay-at-home orders continue longer than a few more weeks, there

could be more lasting damage to the 14 halls that serve as social gathering points across metro Grand Rapids for thousands of families. Originally established decades ago by Polish and Lithuanian immigrants as a way to assimilate into American life but still retain their cultures, the halls have established reputations for organizing fun activities such as monthly dinners, dances and card tournaments, classes in preparing ethnic foods, road trips to sporting events, and wacky competitions such as broomstick pool and bar Olympics.

The sudden orders to shut their doors on March 16 was jarring to all of the halls, Kershner said, and she credited Polish Falcons Aid Society President Rich Nawrocki with helping to get the word out and impress on club officers that it was essential to follow the social distancing directives.

"Rich was absolutely great to work with – we couldn't have reacted as fast to the emergency without him," Kershner said. "Now let's hope that we all remain healthy and this doesn't drag on too long."

**POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY
OF GRAND RAPIDS**

PO Box 1844

Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

<https://polishheritagesociety.com/>

Email us at pshgrandrapids@gmail.com

Facebook: Polish Heritage Society

The mission of the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids is to promote and foster an appreciation of the Polish and Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids area .

The Society publishes this newsletter on a monthly basis. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact editor Matthew Gryczan, Director Richard Panek or Contributor Marilyn Lignell by writing to pshgrandrapids@gmail.com

Board of Directors

President	Adam Porczynski
1st VP	John Theisen
2nd VP	Unfilled
Treasurer	Mary Ann Bergevin
Cor. Secretary	Elena Chaidez
Rec. Secretary	Dennis Ziomkowski
Director	Richard Panek
Director	Matthew Gryczan
Director	Michael Jasperse
Director	Anthony Zasuwa
Director	Unfilled

PHS Member News

By Marilyn Lignell

Help celebrate the 90th birthday of life-time PHS member **Ed Potyraj** and still practice social distancing!

Everyone who's anyone on the West side knows Ed from his long-time support of the PHS, Dozynki Polish Festival, and Pulaski Days as the former owner of Robbins Lockshop, now owned and operated by his son **Robb**. And who could forget his awesome Model A Ford that Ed drove regularly for years in the Pulaski Days Parade. Ed grew up on the West Side, attending Sacred Heart Grade School and Union High School

PHS Board Minutes

By Dennis Ziomkowski, Recording Secretary

A meeting of the Polish Heritage Society was held on February 17, 2020 at the Polish Falcons Hall. Vice President Adam Porczynski called the meeting to order at 6:06pm. Attendance: Mary Ann Bergevin, Adam Porczynski, Dennis Ziomkowski, Elena Chaidez, Anthony Zasuwa, John Theisen, Matt Gryczan. Absent: Greg Rosloniec, Richard Panek, Michael Jasperse

Minutes sent via e-mail to the board from the last meeting were approved with one correction regarding the term 501(C) 3. Motion was made by Elena and seconded by John to accept. Motion passed.

Mary Ann gave the financial report. Motion was made by John seconded by Matt to accept the report. Motion passed. Correspondence: Membership renewals are coming in and checks were given to Mary Ann for deposit. The 1099 for the card reader income was received. Motion by Matt, seconded by Elena to donate proceeds from ticket sales from the Griffins game to the dance group. Amount to be determined. Motion passed. Greg is to check on the River Boat Cruise with more to follow such as price, dates, etc. Mary Ann purchased envelopes for society correspondence purposes.

Motion made by Elena seconded by Dennis to purchase a full page ad, \$50 in the dance group recital booklet. Motion passed.

Motion by Adam seconded by John to update the tent lighting for festival. The current lights are getting very old and getting to be a problem. Research and more information to follow. Motion passed.

May 8 Whitecaps game. Motion by Matt seconded by John to table request to pay or split cost of the dance group tickets into the game till we get a total bill. It's a Pulaski Day Committee event. Close meeting: Motion by John, second by Elena. Meeting ended at 6:35pm. Motion carried

March Board Meeting was cancelled due to Michigan stay-a-home order.

before owning Robbins Lockshop.

His wife **Chara** and kids **Sue, Sally, Mary Kate**, and Robb were planning a birthday party for him this month, but the event had to be cancelled due to the Covid 19 epidemic. So if you want to put a smile on Ed's face and help him celebrate in style (responsibly), send a birthday card to: Ed Potyraj, 6047 Pebble Dr, Allendale, MI 49401



(From left) Chuck Grzegorski, Ed and Chara Potyraj, and Marilyn Ziomkowski enjoyed the PHS picnic this summer.

Join the Polish Heritage Society to receive our monthly newsletter and other benefits!

Annual Student Membership for full-time students through college \$5

Annual Adult Membership \$20

Annual Family or Business Membership \$35

Lifetime Membership \$150

ONLINE

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by going to our website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/>, filling out the Membership form and paying by using the PayPal Button.

MAIL

Fill out this form and send a personal check made out to the Polish Heritage Society to this address:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

P.O. Box 1844

Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____