Dear Resident:

When voters throughout Michigan went to the polls March 8, they had to declare whether they wanted to vote for a Democratic or Republican presidential candidate before they received a ballot.

While voters might say it is nobody else’s business which party they support, it is part of the process when it comes to primary elections. Voters will again have to choose one party’s ballot when they return to the polls Aug. 2, which is the primary for the Nov. 8 general election. The purpose of the Aug. 2 primary is to reduce the number of candidates from each party and in each race to one for the general election.

In nonpartisan races, like for judges, the field will be narrowed to two candidates for each position – or double the number for the total number of spots available (six candidates for three spots, for example).

Turnout is expected to be strong for the Nov. 8 general election because of the presidential race. In that election, it will not be necessary for voters to declare a party to receive a ballot.

Once the field for the primary, then the general election, is set, it will be posted on the Wayne County Clerk’s Election Division website, www.waynecounty.com/clerk/1607.htm. The primary election field will be finalized April 22.

For those who are not registered to vote but want to, the deadlines are July 5 for the Aug. 2 primary and Oct. 11 for the Nov. 8 general election. Voters can register at the county or city clerk’s offices, a Secretary of State office or at www.michigan.gov/sos.

Voters must be at least 18 years of age and a citizen of the United States, and the home address at which they register must match the one on their driver’s license.

Irma Clark-Coleman
Wayne County Commission
Wayne County Commissioner Irma Clark-Coleman has been chosen as one of the Michigan Chronicle’s 2016 Women of Excellence, and will be honored May 13 at a ceremony at Cobo Center.

The Chronicle’s Celebration of Excellence Awards honor local African-Americans who inspire others through vision and leadership, exceptional achievements and participation in community service.

Commissioner Clark-Coleman is in her third term on the Wayne County Commission after first being elected in 2010.

She chairs the Committee on Economic Development and also serves on the Committees on Audit and Public Safety, Judiciary and Homeland Security.

In addition, she serves on the Special Committee on Senior Citizens & Veterans Affairs, which she formerly chaired, and is the Commission’s representative on the Wayne County Airport Authority Board of Directors.

Groups offer a variety of assistance

The Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency was designated by the state in 2015 as the community action agency to serve the city of Detroit with a variety of programs.

Wayne Metro is part of WRAP, or the Water Residential Assistance Program, for those who have fallen behind on their water bills and meet income requirements. Among Wayne Metro’s other programs:

• Community and economic development, including immediate help with critical home repairs.
• Financial empowerment, including financial coaching and information about services.
• Outreach and community services, including assistance to those facing financial difficulties, housing emergencies and personal or family crises.
• Housing/homeless services, including transitional housing.
• Youth and family services, including Head Start, after-school and summer youth programs, and GED and English as a second language classes. Call 313-388-9799 or visit www.waynemetro.org for more information.

Other groups also offer housing assistance:

• National Faith Homebuyers offers down-payment assistance to first-time homebuyers, along with foreclosure prevention assistance and workshops, and financial literacy and homebuyer classes. Call 313-255-9500 or visit nationalfaith.org for more information.
• The Detroit Recovery Project offers rental assistance for low-income families. It also offers assistance to ex-offenders returning to the community, among numerous other programs. Call 313-365-3100 or visit www.recovery4detroit.com for more information.

County helps to light Livernois

Wayne County teamed with the Avenue of Fashion Business Association and University Commons in December to kick off the “Historic Avenue of Fashion Business District Lighting Project,” which is bringing 160 LED lights to the area. The lights are being installed in front of and behind businesses and in alleys and parking lots along Livernois, between Clarita and St. Martins.

The Greater Wayne County Economic Development Corp. awarded a $106,000 grant to University Commons, which is managing the project and hired two Wayne County-based contractors to install the lights, which will complement the 59 street pole lights recently installed by the city.

County finances continue to show improvement

The Great Recession of 2008 was the No. 1 reason why Wayne County’s budget situation became dire, but there’s hope on the horizon. The downturn caused a huge hit in property tax values — Wayne County is collecting nearly one-third less, or almost $125 million annually, than it did in 2007-08.

The Wayne County Commission, Executive’s Office and other officials worked together to address the situation, which has resulted in a general fund surplus of $5.7 million as of Sept. 30, 2015, the end of the last fiscal year; the elimination of the $88 million accumulated deficit; and the near-elimination of the $52 million structural, or annual, deficit.

The biggest factor in the recovery was the transfer of an excess $178 million by the Treasurer’s Office from the Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund. In addition, the county has a consent agreement with the state, which led to significant health care cost savings from unions and retirees.
A work of art

Hubert Massey’s creativity displays Detroit’s rich history

A well-known Detroit artist has received yet another well-deserved honor. Hubert Massey, a member of the Oakman Boulevard Association, recently was chosen as the 2016 VSA Michigan Educator of the Year. He was nominated by JoAnn Wright, principal of Albert Einstein Elementary School in Oak Park, where he was in residence in spring 2014.

VSA Michigan is affiliated with the national organization formerly known as Very Special Arts. It works toward including those of all ages with disabilities to participate in, learn through and enjoy the arts. Massey has taught youth, including the disabled, about how to express themselves through art.

Appointed by Commissioner Clark-Coleman to the Wayne County Council for the Arts, Massey has been an art instructor with the organization, as well as with the Detroit Summer Youth Employment Program and the Advanced Gifted and Talented Program in Detroit.

Massey was commissioned in 2014 by the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority to create a 30-foot-by-30-foot fresco painting at Cobo Center that features images and stories of Detroit pride. It’s a continuation of a central theme of his work – capturing Detroit’s diversity, history and culture in works that will be shared for generations.

Another of his best-known works is the terrazzo floor in the Rotunda Room of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. The work, depicting the struggle of Africans and African-Americans throughout history, is 72 feet in diameter. His work also graces Harmonie Park in Detroit, the Detroit Athletic Club, the Bagley pedestrian bridge in Mexicantown, the IRS Midwest computer center in Detroit, the Atheneum Suite Hotel in Greektown, Detroit Receiving Hospital, the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit, the Flint Institute of Arts and Grand Valley State University’s Richard M. DeVos Center in Grand Rapids. His mural depicting the state’s history was displayed at the former Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit.

Massey earned a bachelor’s degree from Grand Valley, which also awarded him an honorary doctorate. In addition, he studied at University College London’s Slade School of Fine Art and learned the centuries-old fresco technique from former assistants to legendary artist Diego Rivera. Among his numerous community involvements is serving on the Detroit Institute of Arts’ Board of Directors.

Wayne County has been involved with several projects around the 5th District:

• The Wayne County Economic Development Corp. invested $15,000 in the “Birwood Block” for the complete interior and exterior renovation of 10333 and 10335 W. Eight Mile Road, between Birwood and Griggs (west of Wyoming), set to be finished this summer.

The county is working with the Eight Mile Boulevard Association to find tenants for the buildings, which originally were to be demolished.

• The Wayne County Land Bank is in the process of receiving about 1,000 abandoned, foreclosed properties from the Wayne County Treasurer’s Office. The properties are throughout the county, with concentrations in Highland Park and Inkster. The Land Bank is developing a program to make the properties accessible for potential buyers to review.
Brownfield projects will add significant job growth

The Detroit-Wayne County Brownfield Coalition has been working on two projects in District 5, according to the Wayne County Economic Development Corp.

A brownfield is a previously used property that likely needs some sort of cleanup before it can be used again.

One of the projects is the 19031 Livernois property, which is a vacant, run-down commercial strip on the southwest corner of Livernois and Seven Mile Road. A developer wants to redevelop the site, which includes upgrading the building inside and out, and demolishing the eastern section.

The goal is for the property to be used for commercial and retail purposes to bring it back to life after about 20 years and bring jobs and commerce to the neighborhood.

Brownfield cleanup at the site includes removing asbestos and lead-based paint.

Road projects aim for smoother commutes

Relief is on the way for drivers who use two 5th District roads that are in particularly bad shape.

Wayne County and the city of Detroit are finalizing a contract for the city to make improvements on Fenkell, with the goal of finishing the project by the end of this road construction season.

Improvements to Outer Drive by the city are in the planning stages for 2017.

County Department of Public Services crews recently were dispatched to both roads to fill potholes.

Motorists who want to report the location of potholes or other problems on county roads can call 1-888-ROAD-CREW (762-3273) 24 hours a day. If it’s not a county road, the appropriate agency will be contacted.

Problems also can be reported by visiting www.waynecounty.com/dps and clicking on “report road hazard,” or using a smartphone to visit compass.waynecounty.com and click on the “hazard” triangle on the lower right corner.

If they are near the pothole, Compass can capture the location via GPS coordinates.

Flyers flock to Metro Airport

As the Commission’s representative on the Wayne County Airport Authority’s Board of Directors, I’m proud to say that the number of passengers using Detroit Metropolitan Airport is on the rise.

More than 4.8 million people traveled through Metro Airport in the first two months of this year, an 8 percent increase over 2015. For all of last year, more than 33 million travelers used Metro, an increase of more than 1 million customers over 2014.

Thomas Naughton, the Airport Authority’s CEO, said the increase in passengers is likely because of airlines adding more nonstop flights at Metro, giving travelers more destinations from which to choose.

With the increase in travelers comes an increase in security lines, especially between 6 and 9 a.m., the busiest stretch of the day at Metro. It’s especially important for travelers to arrive at least 90 minutes before their domestic flight is scheduled to depart or two hours early for international flights. Travelers also should visit www.tsa.gov to learn what items are prohibited in carry-on and checked luggage, which will prevent delays in the security lines.

Visit www.metroairport.com to learn more about the state’s busiest airport. It will make your traveling experience that much smoother.

The Wayne County Airport Authority oversees operations at Metro and Willow Run airports.
Commission approves $1 million for rape kits

Wayne County has pledged $1 million from its delinquent tax revolving fund to test and investigate more than 11,000 rape kits that had been discovered in 2009 after being abandoned in a Detroit Police Department storage unit. County commissioners joined Wayne County Executive Warren Evans, Prosecutor Kym Worthy and other county officials in November to make the announcement. The Commission then approved $1 million to Worthy’s 2015-16 budget.

The county also gave about 5,000 square feet of space in the Guardian Building for investigators, prosecutors and task force members to use.

Prison pilot program

The Commission recently approved the Wayne County Alternative Prison (WRAP) pilot program, in which judges can sentence low-risk probation violators to vocational and behavioral programs for four to six months at the state’s Detroit Reentry Center, 17600 Ryan Road. Participants will train in hospitality management and food technology.

County offers up programs to slow foreclosure cases

Programs offered by Wayne County and the state have helped to reduce the number of properties being foreclosed upon by the county Treasurer’s Office.

Eric Sabree, who was promoted from chief deputy treasurer to county treasurer on April 4, told The Detroit News in late March that the Treasurer’s Office is expected to foreclose on about 22,600 properties, but as few as 14,000 could be auctioned off in the fall.

Last year, about 28,000 properties were available for auction.

Sabree credited a lower-interest repayment plan offered by Wayne County, along with the Step Forward Michigan plan, which offers assistance.

Properties generally go into foreclosure when taxes haven’t been paid for three years. Those who fall into that category should visit www.waynecounty.com/treasurer or call 313-224-5990 to learn more.

The Treasurer’s Office is on the fifth floor of the International Center Building, 400 Monroe, in Greektown.

Around District 5

Commissioner Irma Clark-Coleman remains a central figure in the community. (Right) The Commissioner assisted needy families with her annual distribution of turkey dinners during the Thanksgiving holiday. (Below right) Commissioner Clark-Coleman produced plenty of smiles among seniors living at the Meyers Plaza Co-op Apartments. (Below) Students from District 5 received backpacks courtesy of Commissioner Clark-Coleman.
Wayne County Parks

Family aquatic fun
May 28

Beginning May 28, a sure way to beat the heat is the Wayne County Family Aquatic Center at Chandler Park on Detroit’s east side. Owned by Wayne County, it features a wave pool, more than 100 spray fountains and two 23-foot-high water slides. It’s at 12660 Chandler Park Drive. Visit www.waynecountyaquatic.com or call 313-822-POOL (7665) for more information.

Mud Day
July 12

Wayne County’s annual Mud Day will be a source of messy fun for children from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. July 12 at Nankin Mills Park in Westland. Children should bring a towel and wear old clothes and shoes or a bathing suit. Call 734-261-1990 or visit www.parks.waynecounty.com for information.

Jazz on the River
August 6-7

Bring your blankets and chairs and get ready to tap your feet to the best of cool jazz at the 21st anniversary of Jazz on the River at Elizabeth Park in Trenton. Call the Parks office in July for the exciting schedule of musicians set to take the stage at 1 p.m.