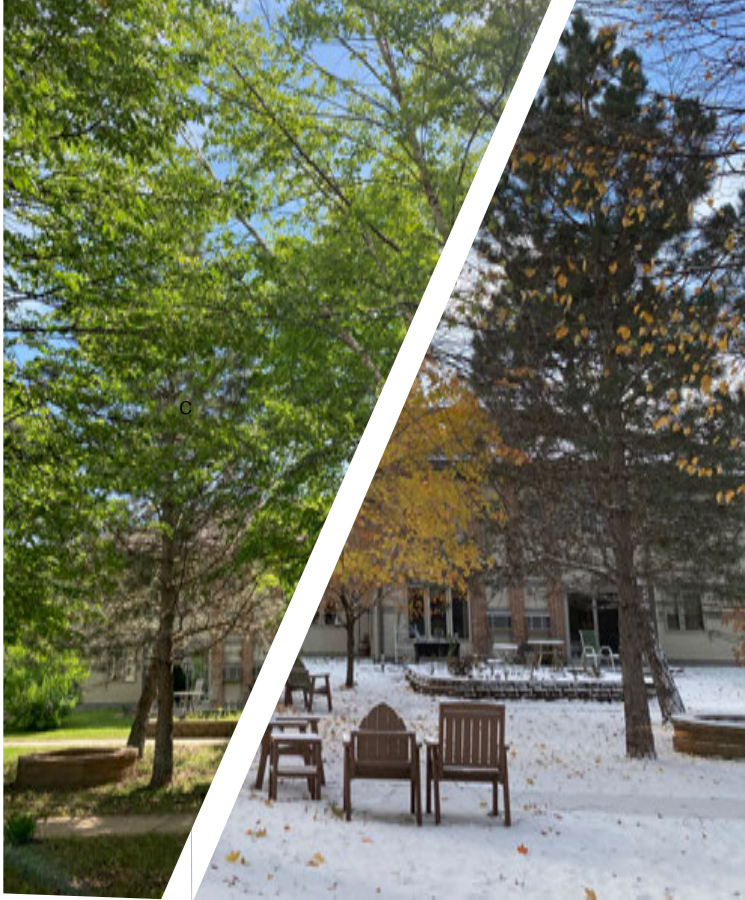


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Official Newsletter of Minnesota Mensa

Volume LX Number 3 December 2023



May/December Courtyard

Photo Montage by Linda Seebach

First Friday & First Friday Feast – Page 5
Minnesota Board Elections Coming – Page 10

M · E · N · S · A · G · E · N · D · A Staff

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★★ The deadline for the January 2024 issue is Dec. 5 ★★

T able of Contents

LocSec's Podium	3	New Members	14
Marx Brotherhood SIG	4	Holiday Movie Quiz	14A
December First Friday	5	Jon's Journal	15
Sharp Women SIG	5	Science Fiction & Fantasy SIG	16
Last Thursday Break	6	Gifted Youth Program	16
<i>Mensagenda</i> Copy Editor	6	Vantage Point	17
GenX SIG	7	Laurent's Circus	18
GenY SIG	7	Talking About Books	19
Annular Solar Eclipse	8	Poetry Corner	19
Tidbits of History	9	On a Whim	20
Nominating Committee	10	Volunteer Judges	21
E·V·E·N·T·S·	11&14	About the Cover	22
Calendar	Center	Board Minutes	23

A dvertising rates

Advertising will be accepted for *Mensagenda* at the following rates.

	<i>Full</i>	<i>Half</i>	<i>Quarter</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Ad</i>
	<i>Page</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Card</i>	
Member Rate	\$30.00	\$18.00	\$10.00	\$8.00	\$5.00
Nonmember Rate	\$50.00	\$30.00	\$15.00	\$12.00	N/A

Please contact the editor for information on ad dimensions and acceptable formats.

* Any current member may place a classified ad of up to 40 words for \$5.

Additional lines, \$1.50 each.

The editor reserves the right to refuse ads.

I nformation

Mensagenda is the official publication of Minnesota Mensa, Local Group #550 of American Mensa, Ltd., which serves the state of Minnesota and certain areas of Wisconsin.

Mensagenda is published to provide members with a schedule of events and activities of the local group. It may also contain organizational and administrative information, and any other material selected for publication by the editor. Opinions expressed in *Mensagenda* are those of the individually named contributors. No material herein may be reprinted without permission of the editor, except by other Mensa publications, provided that *Mensagenda* is credited.

Annual subscription for members of Minnesota Mensa is included in national membership dues. All other subscriptions \$9.00 per year.

Oct. 17 marked the first Mensa proctored admission testing session that was entirely staffed by our local group since the start of the pandemic. Thanks go to Jon Gruebele, our Regional Vice-Chair, for coming up from Chicago in June for two test sessions. I mentioned in previous articles the need to bootstrap our proctoring ability because we had no practicing proctors after the pandemic. Those sessions allowed Tracy Hart to be certified as a full proctor.



The LocSec's Podium

Kevin Borchers

The session in October was led by Matt Bennis, another of our members in proctor training, and observed by Tracy. I provided support as the Testing Coordinator and the third potential proctor. Matt met the first of his two required sessions being observed.

We had a great session in October. Nine people registered. One was called away for a work issue, and all eight showed up. Matt did a great job running a smooth testing session. I noted that we already had two new members in October from that session. One prospect from the session contacted me as he had not heard anything yet, so a few more of those eight may still have their tests in process at the national office.

Working with folks to get them to a test and then see them become members is a great feeling. We need to work on the rest of the membership lifecycle to get them engaged and continue as members.

The entire lifecycle of membership begins with people learning about Mensa. Our local group helps with marketing on our website and public Facebook page. The lifecycle continues through Mensa's admissions process. And then, prospects who join need to be greeted and welcomed to our community. Once people join, we need to provide activities and other ways for them to engage, which the Events Team is working on driving. Then, we need to provide opportunities for interested members to get more involved in the operations of Minnesota Mensa. The People Team is working on volunteerism, incentives, and recognition. The Activities Engine supports members who want to run their own events. The Communications Team will help create processes to keep everyone informed about all the opportunities to be involved in and benefit from a Mensa membership. All these pieces help make Mensa a vital part of members' lives.

November 15 is our next opportunity to bring in more new members through a proctored testing session. I anticipate Matt will become a full proctor after that. Tracy as the new Testing Coordinator will work with me as we plan our growth for 2024. I am very excited as we make progress on our Strategic Plan.

Are there topics you want to know more about that I have not covered? Let me know. Reach me by email to locsec@mnmensa.org or by phone at (612) 819-8088.


 Marx Brotherhood SIG

Kenneth Kuller

Milton “Gummo” Marx (1892 – 1977) was part of his brothers’ vaudeville act. He left The Marx

Brothers comedy troupe just as they were achieving popularity because he felt that he lacked the performing skills of his brothers. He joined the military, serving in the Army Air Corps to help with the war effort for World War I, and was replaced by his younger brother Zeppo. IMDb attributes to Gummo only one on-camera appearance, during 1957, as a guest on the NBC television series talk show *America After Dark*.

Herbert Manfred “Zeppo” Marx (1901-1979) was the youngest and last surviving of the Marx Brothers. The only non-Marx Brothers movie in which Zeppo appeared was *A Kiss In The Dark* (1925). Only two of that movie’s six reels are known to still exist; Zeppo’s cameo is on one of the missing reels. After playing small parts in five of the Marx Brothers movies, Zeppo decided that he did not fit in as a straight man. He left the group to join a talent management company in Hollywood founded by his brother Gummo.

This month, on Dec. 9 at 2 p.m., we will screen the movie *A Night at the Opera* (1935). A sly business manager and the wacky friends of two opera singers in Italy help them achieve success in America while humiliating their stuffy and snobbish enemies. This movie is especially remembered for the stateroom scene and the contract scene. In the stateroom scene Groucho arranges a romantic rendezvous in his stateroom. While he’s waiting, a parade of people walk in, asking either to use the room or to perform their regular duties. The scene culminates with everyone spilling out of the room.

The contract scene contains the following famous exchange:

Chico: Wait, wait. What does this say here, this thing here?

Groucho: Oh that? Oh, that’s a usual clause that’s in every contract. That just says, it says, “if any of the parties participating in this contract are shown not to be in their right mind, the entire agreement is automatically nullified.”

Chico: Well I don’t know. ...

Groucho: It’s all right, that’s in every contract. That’s what they call a sanity clause.

Chico [laughing loudly]: You can’t fool me. There *ain’t* no Sanity Claus!

Sam Wood directed *A Night at the Opera*. On one occasion Wood, who was furious with the Marx Brothers’ ad-libs and antics on the set, yelled “You can’t make an actor out of clay.” Groucho quipped “Nor a director out of Wood.”

In January we will screen the recent PBS documentary *Groucho & Cavett* (2021).

RSVP is required. Contact Ken Kuller at kenneth.kuller@gmail.com or by phone at (952) 465-2134 for location.

The November First Friday was lots of fun. We had some great conversations about books and movies, among other topics. As always, the food was pretty good and our server was excellent.

December First Friday

Don Nemitz

Please add this event to your monthly calendars. The email group messaging process is set up, so if you want a reminder about a week before the Friday, just drop a message to fffeast@mnmensa.org and I'll add you in.

Thanks to Lisa Sanders for volunteering to run registration for December. Tracy and I will miss everyone, but look forward to January's meeting.

First Friday for Dec. 1 will be at the Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555 in Richfield. Their address is 6715 Lake Shore Dr. S., Richfield. We will have a private room for us.

The parking in their front lot is extremely limited, but there is additional parking in the rear with an access door and a short flight of steps down. (Rear lot is not connected to the front one, you have to go back to the street, then turn in) There is some limited street parking near the front, and also a park across the street with parking available.

Their food options are pretty good, with soups, salads, sandwiches, and dinners. Their website is <https://www.facebook.com/vfw5555/>, but they do not post a menu.

The registration will be set up before 6 p.m. for people who plan to come for the First Friday Feast. First Friday socializing, for those not coming for dinner, begins at 8 p.m. It's all one price, \$5 for members, \$7 for guests. We'll be in the same area all evening, but after the dishes are cleared away we could move some tables around to allow for multiple conversations.

If you plan to come for dinner, please RSVP to fffeast@mnmensa.org so we can give them an approximate number.

Sharp Women SIG

Arleen Roberts

Are you knitting and crocheting furiously in the hope of finishing those Christmas presents? Work

on your project while you join us for some pleasant conversation. If you knit, crochet, spin, or create any form of fiber art, or want to start, please join us to converse and work on your own needlecraft project. Don't let the group name fool you, regardless of gender, everyone is welcome.

We will meet this month via Zoom on Sunday, Dec. 10, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Contact SIG coordinator Arleen Roberts at (612) 720-8847 or family@danclan.com for information on how to join us.

Last Thursday Break

Wanda Shelton

G

ames SIG and Last Thursday Break events: This article combines information for both SIGs that I host. Please

read carefully as the options have changed

(so says every automated phone tree in existence).

I will be spending considerable future time and energy dealing with a serious and chronic health issue, so I am not scheduling Games SIG events for December. It may be that on short notice I will be able to host an event on the third Saturday, Dec. 16, and fifth Friday, Dec. 29, for a very few vaccinated players. If you would like to be considered for such an event, please email jouwan2420@gmail.com a day or two ahead of time for permission and details. Note that these dates are not our usual event dates.

If you do not make the cut for Games SIG's possible events, know that you can join the Last Thursday Break Zoom gathering on Thursday, Dec. 28 at 10 a.m. This event will be held unless it conflicts with a medical appointment.

Join the Zoom meeting with link: <https://us05web.zoom.us/j/89180682600?wd=4pbIvis8UVl3mZMCiLaJe5ugb6lBnL.1> or use meeting ID 891 8068 2600 and passcode 5SpeE4. Meet Mensa members in their natural environments or in front of their virtual backgrounds. Hear member opinions in their own voices and question them in yours. Agree? Disagree? Have a completely different take? This is simply conversation, not debate, light-hearted and free-ranging. Best wishes to all. Contact: Wanda Shelton (651) 487-7197 or jouwan2420@gmail.com.

Mensagenda Copy Editor

Wanda is *Mensagenda's* Copy Editor, and she does an outstanding job. She plans to continue doing it. I hope all goes well, but I know medical outcomes cannot be guaranteed, and we need to find volunteers who can do the job, or are willing to learn it. If you might want to be an editor some time, this is a great way to start.

Copy editing is more than just knowing spelling and grammar; it's looking at everything on the page and seeing anything that isn't right. Acquiring skill at that will make you a better writer, because you get to practice on other people's mistakes. For me, learning to edit on publications for the antique car hobby led, much later, to a job with the *Minnesota Daily* when I went back to grad school, and from there to a new career. You never know.

Willing to give it a try? Let me know, and we'll coach anybody who wants to learn. Email me at linsee@plethora.net.

GenX Online: I will be hosting our next virtual meeting via Zoom on Sunday, Dec. 10, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

GenX SIG

Lisa G. Sanders

The Zoom ID is 894 3177 6959 with passcode 241512 and the link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89431776959?pwd=S1krMFBLL0thVi9ha1JWtU5KdDdTz09>.

For our December dinner, we will be going to Black Sea restaurant at 737 Snelling Ave. N., St. Paul, on Dec. 15, at 6 p.m. Please RSVP to Lisa at Lisa.G.Sanders.Bucklin@gmail.com or on the Facebook invitation I will create. Family members are welcome to attend. You can also bring a friend if you like.

Usually six to seven people attend the dinners, but we've had as few as four (at Broadway Pizza) and as many as 10 (at Khan's Mongolian so we might go there again sometime). The food has been good for the most part and the conversation has been interesting.

We really enjoyed Taste of India in September and Q. Cumbers in October. We haven't yet been to Christos Greek for our November dinner as of this writing. We've been visiting restaurants that people have suggested and so far it's been pretty good. We enjoy getting together and seeing each other and we welcome new people. If you have a restaurant idea, we are open to it. Most of the ones we have tried have been recommendations by others.

Other ways to connect with fellow Minnesota Mensa GenXers are in Facebook groups: "MN Mensa Gen X" (where I will post event invitations for our Zoom and in-person meetings) and at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/958072014361618/> where other GenX Facebook groups are also listed, including the original group from the 2000s, National GenX, and Mensa Region 4.

GenY SIG

Shannon Richmond

This month GenY will be going to Padraigs Brewing (formerly 612Brew) for game night.

"Padraigs is a locally owned craft brewery tucked in the corner of the historic Broadway Building in the heart of Northeast Minneapolis. The brewery focuses on producing interesting and balanced beers in an inviting atmosphere, poured by friendly and knowledgeable staff. The taproom and private rental space have both been recently renovated and offer plenty of room."

This event is free to attend (not including drinks or food) and parking is free onsite in their parking lot. This event is on Friday, Dec. 15, at 7 p.m. Padraigs Brewing is located at 945 Broadway St. NE, Minneapolis. For more information visit: <https://612brew.com/>. Please contact Shannon to RSVP and for details at srichmond@live.com or (651) 336-0096.

For other ways to connect with Mensa, join the Facebook group for the national GenY SIG: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GenYMs/?ref=share> or go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MensaGenYMN/?ref=share> for the Minnesota GenY group.

The Oct. 14 annular solar eclipse was visible where I live in Texas. I was not initially thrilled that there was a fair amount of cloud

cover during the eclipse, though the “ring of fire” during totality showed through it. However, when I looked at the pictures, I was very glad the clouds were there. While the sky was still bright, the camera lens could not ‘see’ the eclipse. I didn’t have any special lens for the camera (or iPhone), because I hadn’t realized I would need one.

When the clouds covered the eclipse, I couldn’t see it through my special glasses. But the cloud cover worked as eclipse glasses for the camera.

Annular Solar Eclipse

Marcia McCloskey



Marcia is a former member of Minnesota Mensa, and still a regular visitor to our online events. She sent me these pictures, taken from her front sidewalk. Later we traded eclipse stories.

I’ve seen two total eclipses, one in 1979, which was partial in the Twin Cities. The evening before, some friends called to say they had chartered a six-seater plane to fly to somewhere on the path of totality, there was an extra seat, and would I like to go? So I saw totality from an airport in North Dakota.

The second was an annular eclipse, like this one, when we were living in Shanghai in September, 1987. Our apartment in Shanghai overlooked a small courtyard where the children from the adjacent day-care center went to play outside, and on the eclipse day they were all out, equipped with proper dark glasses., and the teachers were watching to make sure the children were using them safely. They were likely too young to remember.

The foreign expert for German (she was from Austria, actually) told us later that she had seen an eclipse when she was teaching in Africa, and people

were outside banging drums and shouting to drive the demons away. In Chinese mythology, it was a dragon eating the sun who had to be frightened away.

After the few minutes of totality were past, I took my bike to ride downtown, and marveled at the pattern of tiny eclipse images dappling the pavement where the sun shone though the leaves. Marcia hadn't seen that this time, but she knew what it looked like because a friend had one sent her a picture (from a different eclipse), which she shared with me.

— Linda Seebach



T

wo hundred and fifty years ago, on December 16, 1773, members of the Sons of Liberty dumped crates of tea into Boston Harbor in protest of a British tax on tea. In 1767, the Townshend Acts imposed a tax on

various essential goods shipped to the American colonies, including paper, paint, glass, and tea. After years of protests, the British repealed all the taxes except for the tax on tea, and that was only on tea shipped by any company other than the British East India Company (BEIC). The tax was protectionist, hoping to support the BEIC which was having trouble competing with Dutch tea companies. The Sons of Liberty was formed by a group of merchants and smugglers against British taxes. In December, three ships of the BEIC docked in Boston Harbor. Boston merchants led by Samuel Adams demanded that the ships be sent back to Britain which Royal Governor Thomas Hutchinson refused to do. On the evening of December 16, while Adams and John Hancock were running a protest meeting in south Boston, a group of the Sons dressed up as Native Americans, boarded the ships, and threw the tea overboard. In response, the British Parliament passed the "Coercive Acts" which would be rescinded only if the tea was paid for. The punishments included the closure of Boston Harbor, the suspension of the Massachusetts Constitution, the end of free elections, and the appointment of British judges. The Tea Party was seen as a major event that would lead to the American Revolution.

— This excerpt from John Devoti's history column is reprinted with his permission as part of American Mensa's "shared content" program on Mensa Connect. John is a member of Delaware Valley Mensa.

Tidbits of History

The Tea Party — 1773

John Devoti

Nominating Committee

Elected Board Positions

Kevin Borchers

First, Minnesota Mensa needs several Nominating Committee members who are not candidates or otherwise involved in the election. Volunteers on the Committee invite fellow Minnesota

members to run for an elected board position, ensure that interested members submit required information by the deadlines, and gather candidate information to publish in *Mensagenda* and on paper and electronic ballots. Please contact Kevin Borchers right away by email to locsec@mnmensa.org or by phone to (612) 819-8088 to join the Nominating Committee.

Second, Mensa is member-run and needs people like you to help manage the business of our local group. Everyone helps make Minnesota Mensa a unique community and now it is time for you to consider stepping up as a candidate for a board position. Reach out to the Nominating Committee by email to nomcom@mnmensa.org with questions or to state your intent to run for a Board position.

There are six board members elected for two-year terms, and one member appointed automatically. The term begins in April 2024. Board members are expected to attend monthly meetings, which are held online, meaning that Board members can reside anywhere in the state. Board positions and their general duties are:

- **Local Secretary:** Responsible for the business of Minnesota Mensa and presides over meetings.
- **First Vice-Secretary:** Handles the arrangements for the Annual Business Meeting. Coordinates the People Team which focuses on engagement, incentives, and recognition.
- **Second Vice-Secretary:** Coordinates the Events Team, which works to promote member-run activities and events.
- **Recording Secretary:** Takes the minutes at board meetings. Helps webmaster maintain organizational history, e.g., history of board positions, ASIEs, etc.
- **Treasurer:** Manages the operational finances of Minnesota Mensa and prepares reports for meetings and publication.
- **Communications Officer:** Coordinates the Communications Team, which includes the administrators/editors for our communication channels.
- **Past Local Secretary:** The last Local Secretary serves as a resource for the current board. This is not an elected position, but appointed automatically.

Written notice of intent to run for one specific position is due to the Nominating Committee no later than Dec. 30. Candidate statements are due by Jan. 20, 2024, and will be published in the March *Mensagenda*. Contact the Nominating Committee by email to nomcom@mnmensa.org to become a candidate, or if you have questions.

Board Meeting Online, Dec. 5, 7 p.m.. Please contact LocSec Kevin Borchers by email to locsec@mnmensa.org or by phone at (612) 819-8088 for details.

First Friday Feast Dec. 1, 6 p.m., at the Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555 in Richfield. Please RSVP for the Feast before Friday morning. Admission fee is \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members (covers both Friday events). Contact: don.nemitz@comcast.net. See the article on page 5.

First Friday Dec. 1, 8 p.m., at the Fred Babcock VFW Post 5555 in Richfield. Admission fee \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members (covers both Friday events). Non-members welcome (at both events). Contact: don.nemitz@comcast.net. See the article on page 5.

Games SIG No events currently scheduled for December. Contact: Wanda Shelton at jouwan2420@gmail.com. or (651) 487-7197. See Wanda's article on page 6.

GenX SIG Sunday, Dec. 10, 7 to 9 p.m. I will be hosting our December meeting online via Zoom. The link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89431776959?pwd=S1krMFBLL0thVi9ha1JWtU5KdDdTZz09>. The Zoom ID is 894 3177 6959 and the passcode is 241512.

December Dinner: Friday, Dec. 15, 6 p.m., at Black Sea Restaurant in St. Paul. Contact: Lisa G. Sanders at Lisa.g.sanders.bucklin@gmail.com. See the article on page 7.

GenY SIG Friday, Dec. 15, at 7 p.m. Game Night at Padraigs Brewing in Minneapolis. Contact: Shannon at srichmond@live.com or (651) 336-0096. See the article on page 7.

Gifted Youth Program Dec. 10, 1 to 3 p.m. Board games galore! At the Battleground Cafe in White Bear Lake. Contact: Gifted Youth Co-coordinator Angela Gotz at giftedyouth@mnmensa.org. See the article on page 16.

Last Thursday Break Dec. 28, 10 a.m. Coffee break time. Stop by for a chat. Contact: Wanda Shelton, jouwan2420@gmail.com. or (651) 487-7197. See the article on page 6.

LGBT SIG Contact: Jerry at (763) 546-1457.

Marx Brotherhood SIG Dec. 9, 2 p.m., to watch *A Night at the Opera* (1935). RSVP (required) for location. Contact: Ken Kuller at kenneth.kuller@gmail.com or by phone at (952) 465-2134. See the article on page 4.

Reciphiles SIG Dec. 30, 6 p.m., at the home of Karen Bodin at 501 Theodore Wirth Pkwy. in Golden Valley. Our theme this month is Festive!. Contact: Mary Olson Coleman, text to (612) 804-9489 or email at molsoncoleman@yahoo.com.

Science Fiction and Fantasy SIG A possible movie outing the last week of December. Contact: Kevin Borchers by email to techie@kbhome.net or by phone at (612) 819-8088 if you are not on the SIG mailing list. See the article on page 16.

(continued on page 14)

January *Mensagenda* Calendar Deadline:
Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024

December 2023

See pages 11 and 14 for details.

Send calendar items to: mensagenda@mnmensa.org.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26 Science Fiction & Fantasy SIG 1 p.m.	27	28	29 Talking About Books Online 7 to 9 p.m.	30 Last Thursday Break Online 10 a.m.	1 First Friday Feast 6 p.m. First Friday 8 p.m.	2
3	4	5 Board Meeting Online 7 p.m. January 2024 <i>Mensagenda</i> deadline	6	7	8 Second Friday Online 7 to 9 p.m.	9 Marx Brothers SIG 2 p.m.
10 Sharp Women SIG Online 1:30 p.m. Gifted Youth Program Gaming 1 to 3 p.m. GenX SIG Online 7 to 9 p.m.	11	12	13	14	15 GenX dinner, 6 p.m. Black Sea Restaurant in St. Paul GenY game night, 7 p.m. Padraigs Brewing, in Minneapolis	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Christmas Eve	25 Merry Christmas!	26 Science Fiction & Fantasy SIG - Possible movie outing TBD	27 Talking About Books Online 7 to 9 p.m.	28 Last Thursday Break Online 10 a.m.	29	30 Reciphiles SIG 6 p.m.
31 New Year's Eve	January 1 Happy New Year!	2	3	4	5 First Friday Feast 6 p.m. First Friday 8 p.m.	6

Second Friday Online Dec. 8, 7 to 9 p.m. Spend a few winter hours with us. The theme is “Memorable holidays.” Same great Mensa conversation, at a distance. If you haven’t attended before, contact: Kathy Ahlers at boskybay@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

Sharp Women SIG Dec. 10, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., via Zoom online. Contact: Arleen Roberts at (612) 720-8847 or family@danclan.com. See the article on page 5.

Talking About Books SIG Online Dec. 27, 7 to 9 p.m. Time to talk about exciting books. Our December book is *Christmas: Origins and Associations* by William Francis Dawson. Contact: Michelle Peterick at peterick.michelle@aol.com or by phone at (320) 402-9876. See the article on page 19.

Theodore Talk On hiatus until January. Contact: Linda Seebach at linsee@plethora.net for information.

New Members
American Mensa, Ltd.



Andrew Marshall Thief River Falls
James Maxwell Brooklyn Park
Ryan Raab St. Paul

Members Moving/Preferencing In

Miles Allkins Minneapolis
Elizabeth Braun Minneapolis
Allen Kronebusch Rochester
David Waibel Osceola, Wisc.

Rejoining Members

Todd Haarstick Hastings
Susan Hansen Eagan
Mary Headington Minneapolis
Kevin Kamin Minneapolis
Allan Kremer Clitherall
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Mensa member since 1988

2024 Annual Gathering
Kansas City, Missouri
Registration opens Dec. 1

Holiday Movie Quiz

Linda Richter

I am never quite in step matching the topic of my column to the month listed on the masthead, but this issue says it's December and so we'll have Christmas trivia. This year I've combined some Mensa-worthy questions with easier trivia so that you can enjoy it and also share it with your family or coworkers. There are 23 possible points to be scored.

1. Only one Christmas song has won an Oscar. What was it? (one point)
 - A. It Feels Like Christmas, the Muppets
 - B. White Christmas, Bing Crosby
 - C. Christmas Is All Around, Billy Mack (Bill Nighy)
 - D. What's This? Jack Skellington (Chris Sarandon)
2. What seasonal song is heard in the movies more than any other? Rank these in order, starting with the highest, potentially earning four points.
 - A. Auld Lang Syne
 - B. Ave Maria
 - C. Jingle Bells
 - D. Silent Night
3. Another actor was originally slated to play Buddy in *Elf*. Who was it?
 - A. Jim Carey
 - B. John Candy
 - C. Adam Sandler
 - D. Robin Williams
4. Besides Tim Allen's *Santa Clause* movies (Yes, Virginia, this movie title takes an E as in *clause*), earn up to six points for naming full-length Christmas movies with scenes at the North Pole.
5. What was the name of Scrooge's partner in *A Christmas Carol*?
 - A. Ebenezer Hardy
 - B. Timothy Cratchit
 - C. Peter McAllister
 - D. Jacob Marley
6. 2022's *Violent Night* features Santa portrayed by a star from which popular Netflix series? One point for the actor's name, and one for the series' name.
7. *Love, Actually* from 2003 weaves together multiple stories of individuals at holiday time, set in London. Hugh Grant plays a man with a new job, which is:
 - A. Barrister
 - B. Member of Parliament
 - C. Prime Minister
 - D. Symphony Conductor

8. What Christmas movie earned the best-ever box office?
 - A. *Polar Express*
 - B. *The Grinch*
 - C. *Home Alone*
 - D. *White Christmas*
9. In *For the Boys*, a Bette Midler flick that's not specifically for Christmas, what duet do Dixie Leonard (Midler) and Eddie Sparks (James Caan) perform during their Christmas show?
 - A. Let It Snow!
 - B. Baby, It's Cold Outside
 - C. Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer
 - D. What Child Is This?
10. What was the name of Clark Griswold's wife?
 - A. Helena
 - B. Ellen
 - C. Melanie
 - D. Eileen
11. Only one actor has won an Oscar, a Best Supporting Actor award, for playing Santa Claus. Who was it?
 - A. Paul Giamatti in 2007's *Fred Claus*
 - B. Edmund Gwenn in 1947's *Miracle on 34th Street*
 - C. Jim Broadbent in 2015's *Get Santa*
 - D. Tom Hanks in 2004's *Polar Express*
12. Which actor has played Santa more than anyone else, excluding voiceovers? There are two acceptable answers but one point.
 - A. Tim Allen
 - B. George Wendt
 - C. Kurt Russell
 - D. Charles Durning
13. In *The Christmas Chronicles*, in order to fly, what does Santa need?
 - A. His hat
 - B. His sack of toys
 - C. Comet's jingle bell
 - D. Nothing
14. What appeared for the first time ever in 1964's *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians*, one of the worst-ranked Hollywood films ever made?
 - A. A warning disclaiming credit for the film
 - B. A warning to watch for Martians upon exiting the theater
 - C. Mrs. Santa Claus appeared in the movie
 - D. Real children from a local school appeared in the film, not professional actors

Being a proud Mensa member, my darling wife is smart enough to know that giving me a honey-do list might prove unproductive. This, however, is not going to stop me from suggesting a few things for you to do. Hopefully it won't be equally unproductive.

Jon's Journal

Honey Do

Jon Gruebele, RVC4

1. Afraid of missing out? A boatload of our members have not shared their email addresses with Mensa. Even if they have, some have asked their Local Group not to use it. Unfortunately, some communication about events, Mensa news, and lots of other stuff is sent only via email.

If you don't have your email on file or your preferences set to let Groups use it, you're missing out. Learn about events that may not be in the newsletter. Consider subscribing to *Mensa Wired* and *Mensa Leader*. Find out what our Foundation is doing. Optionally get your electronic newsletter faster and in color. Whether they voted or not, in our last election we spent \$22 per vote cast snail-mailing paper ballots to everyone who didn't get an online ballot.

Learn more about what your membership provides and help keep dues manageable. It's easy. Go to [us.mensa.org](https://www.us.mensa.org), register if you haven't already, and then go to My Mensa —> My Membership Profile —> My Communications Preferences. Select some things to start getting electronically. If it doesn't work for you, simply turn it off again later.

2. Attend something. If there isn't anything interesting to do, start something. At a recent Leadership Development Workshop, I suggested a few things that might be a good addition to the monthly Olive Garden® lunch. How about a visit to a scientific government laboratory, a business that gives tours, something active such as hiking or kayaking, a movie, a theater show, tours of an historic site, or a community service event?

The best Mensa events include something intellectually interesting, something the whole family can enjoy, and food. Not every event will do all three, but that's OK. If it works, do it again; if it doesn't, try something else.

Meanwhile, check out the events calendar on the National Mensa website <https://www.us.mensa.org/attend/calendar/>. It lists many in-person and virtual meetings. In particular, registration for next July's Annual Gathering in Kansas City is open now. The earlier you register, the cheaper it will be.

3. Dec. 1 is the official start of our National Mensa election season with various candidates starting petitions. To appear on the ballot next April, Regional Vice-Chair candidates need 100 signatures; National Officer candidates need 250. They would really appreciate your signing their petitions electronically at <https://www.us.mensa.org/lead/amc/elections/2024-election-portal/>. You may sign as many petitions as you'd like. If anyone is interested in learning more about service on the National Board of Directors (AMC), please feel free to contact me for more information.

Feedback? Please contact me at rvc4@us.mensa.org or via phone/text at (309) 693-1359. Region 4's Facebook group is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/americanmensaregion4>.

Science Fiction & Fantasy SIG

Kevin Borchers

C

hristmas Eve and New Year's Eve fall on Sundays this year. We will not be doing a regular meeting. Instead, I will poll the group for a possible movie outing the last

week in December. If we find a movie of interest and set a day and time, we'll do that. If not, we'll have a meeting in January and review what we want to do for 2024.

Contact me if you want to be included in polling for movie interest and are not already on the SIG mailing list.

When: Day and time to be determined between December 26–30.

Where: In-person at a movie theater picked by those who will attend.

Audience: Who knows what we'll pick. It could even be non-genre.

What to Expect: Informal gathering of people up for a movie.

Contact: Kevin Borchers by email to techie@kbhome.net or by phone at (612) 819-8088 for more information.

Get ready for board games galore! Mensa youth and youth of Mensans are welcome to attend a board gaming

Gifted Youth Program

Angela Gotz, Co-coordinator

afternoon on Dec. 10. Immediate family members are always welcome. We'll be going to Battleground Cafe in White Bear Lake, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. (that's a time change, different from the time announced in the print edition). Please email giftedyouth@mnmensa.org if you would like to attend. Also keep an eye on your email, or the Minnesota Mensa Youth Facebook page, for final details to be sent out.

January we are going to head to Adams Hill Park in Richfield for some sledding! January will also be the first regional gifted youth virtual event.

If you are receiving the print edition of this newsletter but haven't received any email communication from me, please login to your Mensa account and check that you have a valid email in the system. Next, click on "My Communication Preferences" and make sure you check the box that says "Allow local groups to contact me via email." We promise you won't get spam, and we don't pass your email on to anyone else!

Do you have a cool job or a bizarre hobby? Do you love talking about it? I'm looking for a few people who would be willing to do an AMA (Ask Me Anything) style virtual event with Mensa youth in Region 4. If you are interested please email region4gyc@gmail.com. It would only be a 30-60 minute time commitment and you can pick the day and time that works best for you!

— Angela Gotz

Food labels routinely display the number of calories per serving and the total number of servings per package. Some labels also list the total number of calories per package.

That's where things get tricky. I recently purchased a package of Grandma's oatmeal raisin cookies from a vending machine. The nutrition label included these befuddling facts:

2 servings per container

Serving size: 1 Cookie (35g)

Calories: Per serving 160 / Per package 310

Wait! If one cookie had 160 calories, how could a package of two cookies have only 310 calories? That total should be 320 calories. Where did the missing 10 calories go? After you ate one cookie, would bits of the second cookie crumble into oblivion? Would eating a third and fourth cookie reduce the calorie calculations even more?

In the name of research, I returned to the vending machine to purchase Grandma's chocolate chip cookies and compare the results. That particular product also listed 160 calories per cookie but with the logical total of 320 calories per package. In other words, the mysterious case of diminishing calories was isolated to oatmeal raisin. The wrapper on Grandma's cookies included a telephone number to call with questions or comments. But the employee who took my call had no explanation why $160 \times 2 = 310$ when applied to oatmeal raisin cookies.

Soon afterward, I encountered a similar conundrum when I purchased Roma pizza at the grocery store. My pepperoni and sausage pizza included the following information:

2 servings per container

Serving size: 1/2 pizza (152g)

Calories: Per serving 350 / Per container 710

Once more, I was puzzled. If half a pizza had 350 calories then a whole pizza should have 700 calories. So how did the product contain 710 calories? Was the round sheet of cardboard underneath the pizza the source of 10 extra calories? During my next shopping trip, I instead selected Roma original supreme pizza. That pizza also listed 350 calories per serving but with the expected total of 700 calories per container. While mathematically reassuring, this discovery poked a hole through my cardboard hypothesis. Unlike the cookies, the pizza packaging provided no hotline to call for help.

Ultimately, I determined that the easiest way to solve this pair of mathematical puzzles was by eating an entire pepperoni and sausage pizza followed by two oatmeal raisin cookies. The +10 calories from the pizza and the -10 calories from the cookies would cancel each other out and make for a balanced meal.

Vantage Point

James Satter


Laurent's Circus
Mother Magi

Cheryl Laurent

The Beloved is generally an excellent gift giver. He has a knack for noticing trinkets I admire and surreptitiously purchasing them for later occasions. His presents are charming, but the fact that he

was paying attention is what's really flattering.

Often, though, inspiration does not follow the calendar, so we try to make things a little easier for each other. We suspend most frivolous self-purchases before Christmas and birthdays and make lists of things we'd like. Alas, the man who can sense an ephemeral whim at a summer art fair is completely flummoxed by a list. I try to be as specific as possible. If I want a new whatzit, I specify that I want a blue, left-handed version of the latest model with the deluxe accessories package. I often include a photo and a web link. What ends up in my stocking will be the 2010 right-handed model in fire-engine red with no accessories and no receipt. No matter. It is the thought that counts. Besides, he's smart enough to fill the rest of the sock with high-quality chocolates.

He's not supposed to be the list professional, anyway. I know where to go for that.

December 2023

North Pole

Dear Santa,

I have been a pretty good girl this year. I increased my volunteer work. I went to the gym more often. I flossed (some). I visited family, twice, and didn't slap or yell at *anyone* no matter how much the f-, um, "folks" asked for it. I hope that qualifies me for a few inexpensive items.

First, I would like a bit of physical and mental comfort. I want to wake up in the morning and not have my first thoughts be, "Ouch!" and, "What fresh hell will today bring?" My religious friends say that this isn't your area, that miraculous healings and inner peace and such are handled by your superiors. However, you are the face of the operation with a known snail-mail address. Please forward my request to the appropriate department.

Do thank the elves for how quickly they adapt their technical game. When I was a toddler, my Drowsy doll talked when I pulled a string. By college, Teddy Ruxpin's eyes and mouth moved in animatronic sync with a cassette recording. (And, again, please accept my apologies for the unfortunate incident with my roommate, Teddy, and a Black Sabbath tape.) And now we have AI writing scripts and making videos and recordings on its own. Impressive!

Could the elves turn their cleverness to updating another Christmas gift perennial? I'm thinking of underwear, specifically women's.

I'm sure Mrs. Claus, being somewhat zaftig, knows the relief of removing her bra in the evening ritual that signifies "I am in for the night." Indeed, given the

months-long daylight of the polar summer, she may appreciate that release more than most. Existing alternatives do not work. Exercise bras are *more* difficult to don and doff than the hook-and-eye kind. (Houdini escaped from straitjackets, but never once attempted to get out of a damp racerback maximum support bra.) What I'm hoping for is a rethinking of the garment itself. I'd like something comfortable enough to wear for long periods of time without frequent readjustment, something that can be easily put on and taken off. I think of my favorite slippers and how I can have them on my feet all day or kick them on and off in a moment.

THAT'S IT, SANTA! That's what I want. Crocs for breasts. Haflinger clogs for bosoms. It is probably too late for this season, but maybe for next year? Please?

Your Friend, Cheryl

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Talking About Books

Michelle Peterick

Our December book is *Christmas: Origins and Associations* by William Francis Dawson; it explains the history of Christmas traditions from Saint Nicholas in Norway and the lengthy steps they have taken through history. With all the changes and mistaken associations, it is an informative read. I look forward to seeing you.

When: Wednesday, Dec. 27, 7 to 9 p.m.

Where: Online via Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81271471236?pwd=R3l2WTh0UTY5R0l2Ly9pOFNGd3M2UT09>. Meeting ID: 812 7147 1236, passcode: 763377. Call (312) 626-6799 for phone-only or audio by phone and enter the meeting ID and passcode.

Audience: All members who would like to get together and talk about exciting books. If you have any questions, contact me at peterick.michelle@aol.com or by phone at (320) 402-9876.

The Poetry Corner Thought Bubble

A thought bubble
 Maybe not even a full thought
 But the start of one
 Floating timelessly
 Coming from nowhere
 No thought of entering the now here
 Just a bubble
 What the thought is
 Where it came from
 Insignificant
 If not leading to another thought
 No why
 No where
 No I or no me
 Just nothing
 A second, a month
 A century, a millennium
 All the same
 All meaningless
 Time zero and holding
 No stimuli to provoke another thought
 Yet
 No stimuli for the original thought bubble
 So maybe
 And then ...
 There was light

— Holmer


On a Whim

Mat Rouch



seem to be hearing it more and more these days: “You can’t prove a negative.” Usually by folks who go on to use the statement as

justification for “you can’t *prove* Bigfoot doesn’t exist” or “you can’t *prove* flying saucers don’t exist.” Sometimes I try to be polite, but in truth this absolutely sets my teeth on edge. Not because the specific examples cited above are silly, but because the assertion that “you can’t prove a negative” is totally, unequivocally, demonstrably *wrong*. And I will demonstrate this to you right now.

So, what am I going to do? Maybe prove that there *isn’t* a silver teapot full of mashed bananas orbiting a red dwarf star somewhere in the Andromeda galaxy? No, I shall leave that one alone. Instead, I will prove to you—big dramatic pause—that the square root of two is *not* a rational number.

A good number of you are tempted to roll your eyes and stop reading at this point, but really, It’s the same kind of question, isn’t it? What is a rational number? Simply a number that can be expressed as the ratio of two integers—like $2/3$ or $5/6$ or $22/7$. I claim that the square root of two (that is, the number that, multiplied by itself, equals two) *cannot* be represented by a ratio of *any* two integers. Stated that way, proving it sounds like a tall order. After all, there is an *infinite* number of integers. How can I say for certain that there does not exist a pair of them somewhere up in the squillions—let’s call them p and q —such that p/q is *exactly* equal to the square root of two (which I will henceforth refer to as “*root-two*” for brevity)? My extragalactic teapot problem seems almost preferable.

To spoil the ending, we do it with a tried-and-true style of mathematical proof called a *reductio ad absurdum*, or “reduction to absurdity.” We start by assuming the *opposite* of what we want to prove and show that doing so *always* leads to a logical contradiction. Since contradictions are the ultimate no-no in mathematics, any assumption that generates one *must be false*.

So, let’s begin. I promise this will involve nothing more advanced than arithmetic concepts you learned in high school or earlier ... and an ability to focus for a few minutes even if you don’t like the subject matter.

As I stated above, we start by assuming the opposite of what we want to prove. That is, we assume that there *are* two integers p and q such that p/q equals *root-two*. Now we work through the implications.

Step one: If our p and q have any common factors, remove them before continuing. For example, say integers $p = 9$ and $q = 6$ make up our potential p/q , yielding $9/6$. Since 9 and 6 are both divisible by three, we divide both p and q by that common factor, redefining them as $p = 3$ and $q = 2$. We can get away with this because removing common factors always leaves a ratio with the same value ($9/6$ is precisely equal to $3/2$, in our example). That’s a long-winded explanation of common factors, but I want to avoid any cries of foul play later on.

Step 2: Square both sides of the equation: $p/q = \text{root-two}$ becomes $p^2/q^2 = 2$.

Step 3: Multiply both sides by q^2 , in other words $p^2/q^2 = 2$ becomes $p^2 = 2q^2$.

With me so far?

Let's pause here and take stock. $p^2 = 2q^2$ means that p^2 is an *even* number (because it can be represented as some other integer— q^2 in this case—multiplied by two). And if p^2 is even, then p must also be even, because any even integer squared is *always* another even integer, and any odd integer squared is *always* odd. So

Interim conclusion No. 1: p is an even number.

Step 4: Since p is even, we can define it as $2r$, where r is another integer (equal to half p 's value, duh). This seems obvious and rather pointless, but it's important. Trust me. So... $p = 2r$.

Step 5: Square that last equation: $p = 2r$ becomes $p^2 = 2^2r^2$ or, more simply, $p^2 = 4r^2$.

Step 6: Look back at step 3 above. From that we see that $p^2 = 2q^2$, right? But from step 5 we also know that $p^2 = 4r^2$. So, we know *two different ways* to define p^2 . Cutting out the p^2 middleman, we can say $2q^2 = 4r^2$. Got that?

Step 7: Really simple. Divide both sides of that equation by two: $2q^2 = 4r^2$ becomes $q^2 = 2r^2$.

Similar to what we did after step 3 above ... $q^2 = 2r^2$ means that q^2 is an even number. And since q^2 is even, we know that means q is even. So

Interim conclusion No. 2: q is an even number.

Well, so what? All we've shown is that if $p/q = \text{root-two}$ then *both* p and q must be even. *But...* way back in step 1 we specified that p and q have been *reduced to have no common factors*. If they are both even, they have at least *one* common factor (namely 2). We have arrived at contradictory statements: " p and q have no common factors" and also " p and q have *at least one* common factor." These statements cannot both be true. That means that our initial assumption, that *root-two* can be represented as the ratio of two integers p and q , *must be false*.

Conclusion: *root-two cannot* be represented as the ratio of *any* two integers. QED.

There, I have successfully *proven a negative*. And it's not like I invented this all by myself. Hippasus of Metapontum proved that *root-two* is not rational way back in the fifth century BCE. Legend has it that Pythagoras, who was a big believer in ratios, had Hippasus *sentenced to death by drowning* for his heretical discovery. Some people really can't handle being wrong.

Volunteer Judges Needed for Mensa's Scholarship Program

I am expecting around 400 essays from applicants for the 2024 Mensa Scholarships. We have some hosts for the "in person" sessions and quite a few returning judges. However, more are needed. The dates set are the afternoons of Saturday, Jan. 27, Sunday Feb. 4, and Saturday Feb. 10, 2024. If you can be a judge or host this year, please contact us at scholarships@mnmensa.org.

— Barbara H Andersen, Scholarship Chair for Minnesota Mensa

I get really tired of looking out of my window at nothing except a gray snowy courtyard for months on end. And my windows face east, so for three months or so around the solstice I get no direct sunlight at all, because the sun is so low my patio door is always in the shadow of the south wing (to my right).

This winter, I decided, I needed something different to look at. In May, I took a photo of the courtyard trees in full leaf. I found a company online that will print whatever you like on translucent film. Like a piece of kitchen cling wrap, if you smooth it onto a window, it just stays there—hence, “window cling.”

Businesses use these to post their hours or their daily specials in their windows, facing out so they can be read by those passing by.

This is what I see now, and the source of the cover photos (the “December” photo was actually taken Oct. 31, when the first snow fell). I find green trees and blue sky more cheering in these dark days.

About the Cover

Window Cling

Linda Seebach



• ASIE Review

- ◆ **Motion 23/11-04 (KB/MP):** Remove policies 21/04-02, 21/04-03, 21/04-04, 21/04-05, 22/06-03, 21/07-07, 21/07-09, 21/07-10, 21/09-02, 21/09-03, 21/10-02, 21/11-02, 21/11-03, 21/11-04, 22/02-02, 22/02-03, 22/03-02, 22/05-01, 22/05-04, 22/05-05, 22/06-02, and 22/06-03. Passed.

Next Meeting: Next meeting will be online at 7 p.m. on Dec. 5.

Adjournment: LocSec Kevin Borchers adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

B

oard Meeting – Nov. 7, 2023

Kevin Borchers, Acting Recording Secretary

Call to Order: LocSec Kevin Borchers called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Attendees: Kevin Borchers, Bill Conlan, Bria Knorr, Michelle Peterick.

Approval of the Previous Minutes: Motion 23/11-01 (KB/MP): To approve the minutes of the October 3 meeting. Passed.

Board Officer Reports

- Local Secretary: Membership was 853 as of Nov. 1.
- Vice Secretary:
 - ◆ People Team: next meeting on Nov. 14.
- Second Vice Secretary
 - ◆ Events Team: met Oct. 19, next meeting on Nov. 16.
Sent surveys and will review results on the 16th.
 - ◆ Book club going well with five or six attendees. Monetary policy next, breakdown of the origins of holidays for December.
- Treasurer
 - ◆ October financials coming.

Appointed Officer Reports

- Open positions and changes [Kevin]
 - ◆ MOTION 23/11-02 (KB/BC): The Minnesota Mensa Board appoints Tracy Hart as Testing Coordinator. Passed.
- Membership Officer [Bill C. acting M.O.]
 - ◆ Three new members, four move-ins, and nine rejoins in October.
- Testing Coordinator [Kevin]
 - ◆ Great attendance with eight prospects at Oct. 17 session, several are already new members.
 - ◆ Next session on Nov. 15, which should complete Matt Bennis' requirements to be a full proctor.
 - ◆ New proctors and I to discuss testing plans for the next calendar year.

Old Business

- Elections
 - ◆ Still recruiting for the nominating committee as no one has volunteered yet.
 - ◆ Recruiting for board vacancies.
- Regional Gathering 2022 Financial Closure
 - ◆ \$644 in donations to the Mensa Foundation for the scholarship
 - ◆ **MOTION 23/11-03 (KB/MP):** Release around \$805.49 of the \$900 in budgeted funds from the main account to cover the remaining RG 2022 expenses. Passed.

(continued on facing page)

