

High school alum hits the big time, gives back to alma mater

Lake View High School alum Kenny Coleman, class of 1984, is one cool cat. Mark your calendars now for Coleman's upcoming live video recording and CD release concert, Kenny Live



Heart of the 'Hood By Felicia Dechter

in Chicago, to support LVHS's Music Dept. Coleman will perform his smooth jazz album, "Simply Kenny," with Grammy Award-winning musicians and singers on Oct. 12 in the school's auditorium, Comedian BLT will also appear.

Coleman, a jazz and blues percussionist, is a grad of the American Conservatory of Music here in Chicago. He has played with the likes of Jennifer Hudson, Johnnie Mathis, Willie Pickens and Koko Taylor, among many others.

Tix are \$45 and \$50 plus a 10% service fee. Proceeds go directly to the Music Dept. to help with covering costs of instruments, music stands, sheet music and other goods, including scholarships. The goal is to raise \$10,000. For more info or tickets call (773) 733-4951 or go to www.onnismusic.com.



Kenny Coleman will perform for a fundraiser on October 12th at Lake View High School.

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Make it with you... Join the Jewish Women of Lakeview for a Mega Challah Bake at 7:30 p.m., Sept. 24 at the JCC, 524 W. Melrose St. Whether you've never baked a loaf in your life or you're a pro, come for a night of "unity and inspiration," and to learn the secret of making a great loaf of Challah. Yum. RSVP required, cost is \$25. For more info call 773-853-1284 or email Info@JewishLakeview.com.

Activists question new TIF in Wicker Park, asks 'are they moral?'

BY JIM VAIL

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) continues to creep across the map of Chicago like a tax cancer, and this time the target is Wicker Park.

The city has over \$1.5 billion sitting in a TIF account while Mayor Lori Lightfoot is saying they will need to raise taxes because the city has a \$850 million budget deficit.

Some of the TIF revenue collected last year could go toward covering the city's budget gap. The city can declare a TIF surplus, meaning it has more money in those funds than it needs. So far Mayor Lightfoot has not suggested that remedy for the city's current financial straits, even though the mayor has control over the TIFs. At a recent TIF forum, tax activist Tom Tresser cited the example of Mayor Rahm Emanuel grabbing \$88 million in TIF funds to avert a previous teachers strike.

"There is \$1.5 billion in unspent TIF funds at the end of 2018 and people don't know this," said Tresser, co-founder of the TIF Illumination Project.

Tresser explained the history and current dilemma of TIFs to the Wicker Park Committee TIF forum on Sept. 10. He claims it was his 77th public forum to inform the public about a controversial plan designed to subsidize development in blighted areas, but in reality has financed wealthy downtown developments as well as many on the North and Northwest sides.

The TIF Illumination Project forum focused on the 11 TIFs in and around Wicker Park in Wards 1, 2 and 32 for 2018. Tresser said \$8 million was extracted from the 1st Ward, \$14 million from the 2nd Ward and \$10 million in the 32nd Ward.

And the Super TIF adjacent to the Red and Purple CTA Line is sucking up property taxes faster than anyone had imagined. Running from North Ave. to Devon Ave., it brought in \$115 million last year, but half of that is going to Chicago Public Schools.

Through 2018, there are 145 TIFs in Chicago and 303 TIFs in the suburbs for a total of 448 in Cook County. About \$8 billion in local property taxes have been syphoned off through TIFs since 1986.

"About \$40 billion a year in TIFs are being raised across the country, but oddly nobody is counting all the TIFs," Tresser said. "But no other city is quite like this one. Chicago TIFs have run amok."

Tresser told the Wicker Park audience that suppose 1,000 properties in a TIF region generate \$10,000 in property tax which is the base. Then in 10 years there are 2,000 properties that generate \$20,000 in property tax. The extra \$10,000 in prop-

erty tax goes into the TIF. That extra TIF money cannot be used for the schools and parks or other units of local government that receive property taxes for 23 years. Those property tax dollars syphoned off must then be replaced by money raised outside of TIF districts. So each new TIF district created is a de facto property tax increase on the rest of the city. Property owners have to pay more property taxes because the schools and parks are short changed.

The City of Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development which administers the TIFs gets a cut of about \$8 million per year, or \$80 million over 10 years.

"I always thought this is unusual because they have a budget," said Tresser. "They do it, but they never explain why."

The Lincoln Yards (\$1.3 billion) and Project 78 (\$1 billion) TIFs include \$800 million in finance charges. This is due to the city's poor credit rating. The city must pay very high interest rates for borrowing against future TIF income, as they're doing in Lincoln Yards.

Tresser also claims that TIFs are racist and further economic inequality and segregation. He points out that \$842 million in TIF money was given to projects in the Loop, while \$10.5 million in TIF money was given to a Sears store on State St. that closed down. "They hoard taxes in prosperous communities."

He also believes that TIFs are corrupting, noting that Ald. Brian Hopkins (2nd) received \$6,000 from the law firm that does the tax work for Sterling Bay, the

TIF ruling on Lincoln Yards suit

Anti-TIF activists got bad news Monday when a Cook County judge held that the groups challenging tax subsidies for the Lincoln Yards project had no standing to bring the case.

In his written opinion, Circuit Court Judge Neil Cohen said that Grassroots Collaborative and Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education could show no harm they have suffered from the city's decision to grant the project subsidies.

The controversial agreement, rushed through the City Council in the waning days of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's administration, authorized up to \$1.3 billion in TIF funds to developers Sterling Bay.

The judge said that "The facts alleged in the complaint clearly show that plaintiffs have no standing to bring suit against the city, as they show no distinct, palpable injury to a legally cognizable interest fairly traceable to the city."

The activists had hoped to show that Chicago's administration of TIF is discriminatory and illegal and that the Lincoln Yards should never have been approved.

developer of the Lincoln Yards TIF, that needed Hopkins approval. Tresser believes TIFs are not transparent and operate like a predatory loan. When the city borrowed \$1 billion, it also paid \$1 billion in interest, he stated. He claims the tax rate has increased 11% due to TIFs.

"I am often asked is this legal," Tresser said. "It is legal, but is it moral? There is a lot of money at stake. It's inherently flawed," he said. "It's time to end them."

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