



New Train Station; Will it get riders?

"Lack of transparency is a huge political advantage"



"Call it the stupidity of the American Voter"

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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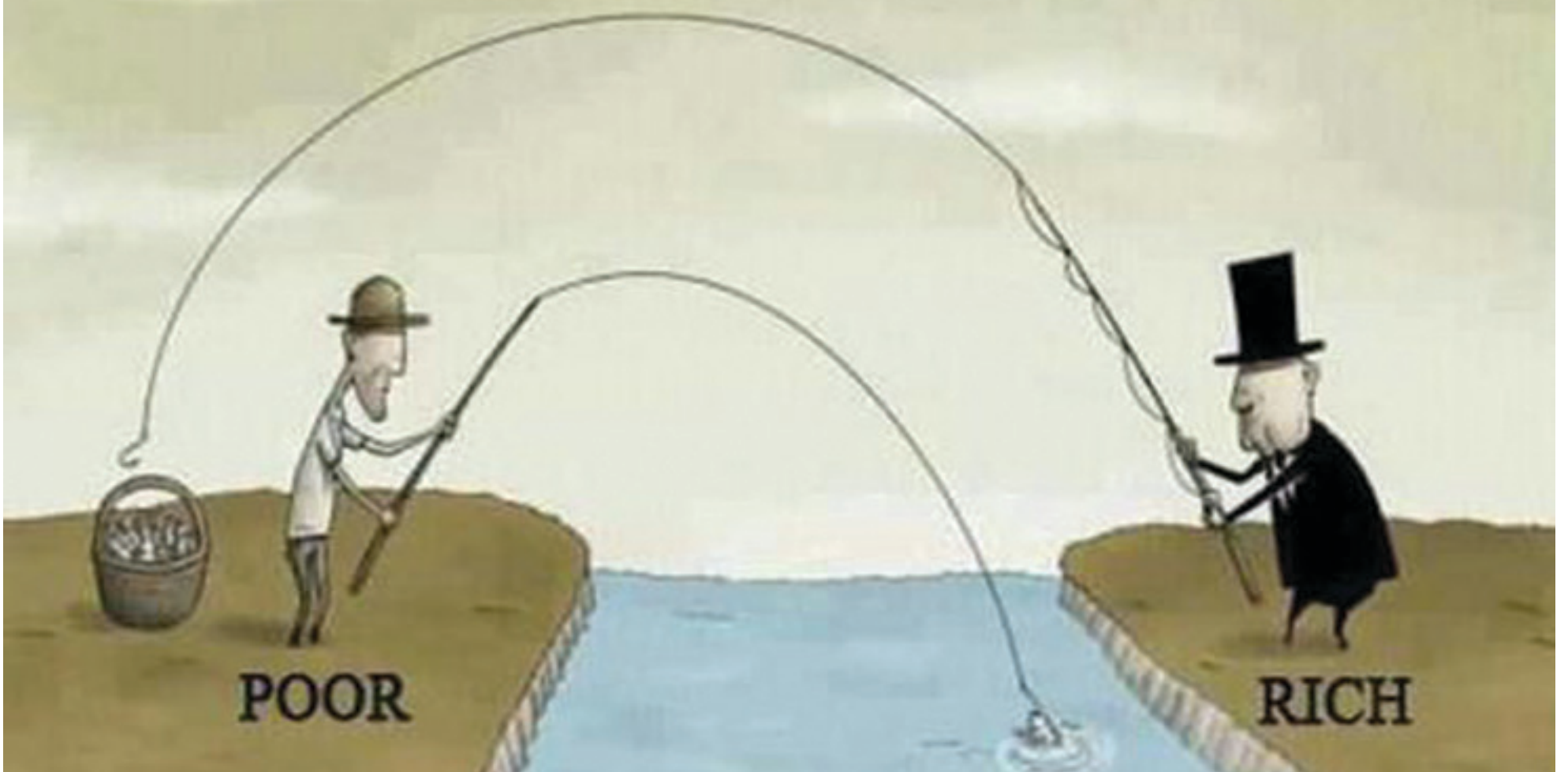
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In Niagara Falls, Home Of Big Government

Mike Hudson

Bad luck comes in threes, they say, and for residents of Niagara Falls this cliché has been visited with a vengeance. The perennially cash strapped city has both the highest crime rate and the highest taxes per capita of any municipality in New York State, and is run by a disproportionately large number of administrators who make more than \$100,000 annually.

The city boasts one of the best known tourist attractions on the face of the earth, the majestic falls themselves, and is the site of the Seneca Niagara Casino which, until recently, has contributed an average of \$20 million a year into the city's coffers.

Yet the living conditions of those who call the city home can best be described as bleak. Per capita income and median household income are well below statewide averages, even when those public employees earning six figures are figured into the equation.

Six out of every 10 residents are receiving some form of public assistance, and the latest "growth industry" to sweep the city consists of a pair of oversized methadone maintenance clinics to ser-vice the growing population of heroin addicts.

And with 158 registered sex offenders living there, chances are one in 315 that the guy ahead of you in line at Tops Friendly Market has been tried and convicted of some unspeakable crime.

The voting public hardly seems dissatisfied. In November, they returned two-term incumbent Mayor Paul Dyster to office in a three way race against local businessman John Accardo and city Water Board employee Glenn Choolokian. While he only managed to collect 47 percent of the vote, the 4,428 ballots cast in favor of his reelection were more than enough to ensure victory.

Many of those voting for Dyster –if not the majority – were employees of the city and the school district and their family members.

The incumbent mayor enjoyed the support of both the police and fire unions as well as the teacher's union.

Additionally, the voters elected school teacher Ezra Scott Jr. to the city Council, giving school dis-trict employees a solid, pro-Dyster majority. The ramifications of this have yet to become clear, but the traditional line dividing the city's two main taxing entities has definitely been blurred.

With eight million visitors each year, coming from all around the globe, the condition and fate of Niagara Falls is more than just a local issue. For many of the tourists, the city is the only part of New York State they'll ever visit. For others, it is the only destination in the entire country.

Despite the fact that city police officers constitute the majority of the 69 city employees who make more than \$100,000 a year, Niagara Falls is a hotbed of street crime. Increasingly, tourists and lo-cals alike are likely to become the victims of violent or property crime.

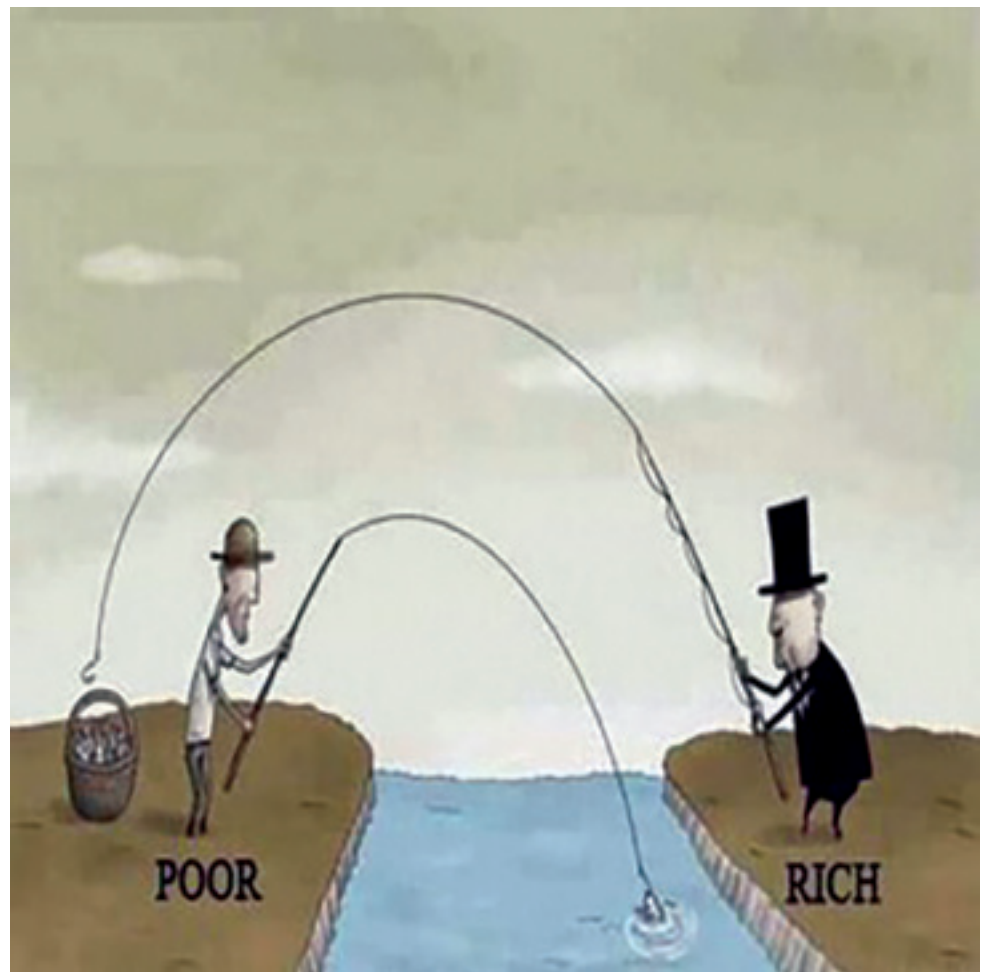
Niagara Falls has been named the most dangerous city in the state of New York by the popular in-ternet site MyLife.com, while a detailed study conducted by the website Neighborhoodscout.com arrives at the conclusion that the city is the 53rd most dangerous place in the entire country.

Yet another website, Roadsnacks.net, reaches a similar conclusion.

"Niagara Falls has the 4th highest violent crime ranking in the entire state of New York, and the property crime rate ranks 2nd worst in the state," the website reports. "In fact, in 2013, there were 2,807 property crimes committed. That's a lot of stolen property."

For a poor city unable to afford the kind of police and fire protection enjoyed by residents of other municipalities, this might be understandable. But that is not the case.

With 49,468 residents as of the 2013 US census estimate, the 69 employees earning more than \$100,000 annually averages out to



In Niagara Falls the rich get richer and the poor get poorer – and in Niagara Falls – the rich are the government workers. With their high pay and pension padding, they form an elite rulership.

one big earner for every 717 residents. That is high compared to many other cities, large and small.

Binghamton, with 47,376 residents, has only seven \$100,000 plus city employees, one out of every 6,768 residents. Troy, with 50,129 residents, has 34 city workers making more than \$100,000, or one for every 1,474 citizens.

And Utica, with a population of 62,235, has only 19 earning more than \$100,000.

That's one city worker earning more than \$100,000 for every 3,275 residents – about five times lower than Niagara Falls.

Albany, with twice the population, at 97,856, has only 81 city employees earning more than \$100,000 or one out of 1,208.

But Buffalo, with more than five times the population (261,000), beats Niagara Falls with 437 employees earning in excess of \$100,000, or one out of 600 residents. What is it about the Niagara Frontier?

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The Rich Get Richer While The Poor Get Poorer

Some other area municipalities also have more than the average number of \$100,000-plus employees. Amherst has 105, Cheektowaga and Hamburg each have 28, Depew gets by with just seven, Lackawanna has nine, Lockport has 20, Orchard Park and North Tonawanda have 12 apiece and Tonawanda and West Seneca have 26 each.

The situation is much the same in the Niagara Falls City School District. According to the web-site seethroughny.net, 90 school district employees earn more than \$100,000 a year, despite the fact that the district is among the poorest in the state.

In Albany, which is comparatively affluent and nearly twice as large, there also 90 school employees making more than \$100,000. And Buffalo schools also employ 90 teachers and administrators making \$100,000 a year, despite the fact that the district is five times as large.

And Utica has only 14 school district employees earning more than \$100,000 per year despite the fact that it has almost 10,000 students – compared to 7,000 in the Niagara Falls School District.

As with the city, the disproportionate spending on salaries does not particularly translate into tangible results in the school district.

In Niagara Falls, just 60 percent of high school students received diplomas in 2014, compared to a statewide average of 76 percent. In fact, the bloated salaries may actually be taking away from the students in other

areas.

According to the New York State Education Dept., per student spending in the Niagara Falls district is relatively low, at just \$18,515 a year. Buffalo spends \$20,260 per student and the statewide average is \$23,370 a year.

It is of course impossible to estimate the number of workers in Niagara Falls' private sector who make \$100,000 a year, but it's a sure thing to say that the number comes nowhere near the 159 combined city and school district workers.

In a municipal economy where the per capita income for all residents is just \$20,327 and the average household scrapes by on \$31,531, according to the website City-Data.com, the tiny handful who combine to pull

down more than \$20 million each year constitute a ruling elite.

If the high salaries resulted in positive outcomes for schoolchildren or those who want simply to walk across town without being robbed, there would – perhaps – be some justification for them.

There are few positive outcomes in Niagara Falls, however. As it is, there exists an almost feudal division between the haves and the have nots. A rich minority backed by the authority and power of government, and the large underclass, more than 60 percent of whom are collecting some form of public assistance.

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Train Station And Wallenda – Same Old, Same Old

Anna Howard

Train station

The Niagara Falls Reporter has been pointing out for the past four years that the train station has yet to find an operating budget.

The Reporter also wrote not too long ago that the residents should look for US Sen. Charles Schumer to come to the rescue with federal money to run the station for the first couple of years... the train station is too costly

to fail in that Schumer has hung his name on the project and he can't afford to let himself look like he backed a ridiculous facility that has no riders and no budget.

We suspect Dyster knows that.

And the doors will open and the federal dollars will come.

But that doesn't mean there will riders.

Wallenda

The Niagara Gazette recently wrote that it would be great if high wire artist Nik Wallenda would locate an attraction here.

The challenge is that Dyster ignored and harassed Wallenda from day one of his walk the falls project.

Dyster ignored a public Wallenda planning session at the IDA offices; he made it almost impossible for Wallenda to practice his wire walk in the downtown; he tried to make Wallenda pay a \$25,000 fee after the walk was over; he ignored all of Wallenda's efforts to locate a museum or wire walk facility in the downtown.

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This Just In: Hamister To Break Ground. Maybe. Possibly. Or Maybe Not.

Anna Howard

The Reporter, in its December 30 print edition, stuck the proverbial fork in the hind end of the Hamister hotel project as we called it “deader than dead.” The very next day council chairman Andrew Touma appeared on the Vince Anello radio show to say, during his one hour visit, that the Hamister hotel could potentially break ground within coming weeks.

Chairman Touma told Joe Schiro, an Anello caller, when Schiro mentioned the moribund Hamister project: “Joe, multiply

your frustration by ten times and that’s my frustration” with the Hamister arrangement. The chairman then said he had heard there may be a Hamister ground breaking coming soon. The show’s host chuckled at the thought of a purported winter construction start. But the Hamister deal stopped being amusing a long time ago.

The project was selected more than two years ago for fast track development on a prime piece of downtown land as it kicked up a whirlwind of political dust never before seen in the history of the city. The Hamister frenzy hit a high when Governor Cuomo weighed in during the 2013 council race to



help drive Sam Fruscione from office. And out of office Fruscione went. But the Hamister project never developed as promised and it remains one more Dyster administration mystery defying public transparency.

And here we are many months later with elected officials tossing off throwaway lines like, “I heard it may break ground in coming weeks.” Only in Niagara Falls does this nonsense pass for ac-countability and good government.

Chairman Andrew Touma has heard a rumor: Hamister may break ground one day soon.

Dyster’s Concern Over Global Warming Is Just More Political Hot Air

Anna Howard

The Niagara Gazette recently wrote an editorial that was cautiously critical of Mayor Dyster. The editorial questioned the mayor’s actions in taking the time to support the international fight against global warming. While a global warming summit took place in Paris last week the mayor and his comrades on the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Initiative parroted the Paris conference state-ment.

The Gazette pretty much hit the nail on the head regarding the mayor’s enthrallment with the issue of global warming. However, the complete record will show that this mayor has been pandering to any number of national and global issues while ignoring key issues on the city’s home front since first elected.

Several years ago the mayor agreed with environmentalists that the Asian flying carp (we kid you not, google it) was presenting a

threat to the Niagara area. This is a trash fish that multiplies quickly, threatens other fish species, and aggressively leaps out of the water. Paul Dyster went on record, again, with the Great Lakes St Lawrence Initiative to fight the flying carp. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, he was already spending the city into fiscal oblivion.

Nothing proceeds like excess so Mr. Dyster moved from fighting the flying fish to joining Mayor Bloomberg’s Mayors Against Illegal Guns organization. The irony of the New York City billionaire politician railing for gun control while being surrounded 24/7 by an array of heavily armed private guards was apparently lost on Mayor Dyster, who himself is a gun owning deer hunter. It seems that both Bloomberg and Dyster are in support of everyone having their Second Amendment rights violated as long as they get to keep their hunting guns and armed guards.

Global warming and gun control, and the would-be green economy of wind and solar energy that has yet to prove itself, have occupied Mayor Dyster throughout his time in office. The Reporter has written extensively on the glaring irresponsibility of the mayor focusing on these issues while the city he was elected to serve trembles on the edge of insolvency.

While the mayor worried about fish that fly and climate that allegedly warms he was running the city into debt and deficit. While

the mayor was gazing at his navel in contemplation of the earth’s future he allowed residents to go without running water in the winter, he hiked taxes, he fouled up municipal trash pickup, and squandered nearly \$100 million in taxpayer casino revenue.

Mayor Dyster has had his priorities backwards from day one of his first term. While some see this as newly discovered information the Reporter has been covering it for nearly eight years.

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Touma At \$125,000 Plus Per Year Courtesy Taxpayers Can Afford To ‘Not Sign Up For The Pay’

Anna Howard

According to the Buffalo News, Council Chairman Andrew Touma said “council members receive a part-time salary of \$12,000, but they are on call all the time. He said in comparable cities elected officials receive \$15,000.

“But we don’t sign up for the pay. Moving the city forward is why we are all here,” said Touma.”

He’s right.

But he can afford to be right since Touma makes \$103,500 as a school teacher/administrator, plus he gets health insurance benefits worth about \$17,000 at the school district.

Touma also makes \$12,000 as a [part time] council member and he also takes the \$10,000 health insurance opt out. All told, Touma hauls in \$125,000 plus health insurance.

He can afford not to sign up for the pay because he is one of the highest paid government employees in the city.

Touma, the third year councilman, second year council chairman, and creator of the city’s Finance Advisory Panel, appeared on the Vince Anello show last July 28, telling the former mayor how he planned to cut the city budget.

Touma touched on the city’s fiscal woes with the chairman speaking freely as to how he would take an axe to the cost of city per-



Who says government doesn't pay? Andrew Touma doesn't do half bad....

sonnel.

Touma told Anello, “When I ran in 2013 I didn’t realize the extent of the budget problems.”

Touma told Anello, “If personnel costs are 80% of your budget where do you look first” for cuts? The comment was eye opening in that Paul Dyster, and the “putty in the mayor’s hands” council majority have been marching in lock-step with the “spend like a drunken sailor mayor” as Dyster sent personnel costs through the roof by: increasing department head pay; endless stipends; doubling salaries through overtime; and, hiring

political friends for new or vacated positions.

So, where will the chairman – the man who created the city’s Finance Advisory Panel and spear-headed the city’s adopting a relationship with the New York State Financial Restructuring Board for Municipalities – make his cuts?

Back then he told Anello he will “Make cuts in department budgets...reduce travel...cut equipment purchases...make cuts through attrition and retirement...initiate worker furloughs...and make modifications to employee benefits.”

When chairman Touma appeared on the Anello show on December 30, 2014, he similarly blamed the city debt, as had the mayor, on personnel costs.

At that time he pointed to the health insurance “opt out” clause and employee health insurance as a key cause of the city deficit.

What Touma failed to tell Anello back then was that he was receiving an annual \$9,700 health insurance opt out payment, in addition to his \$12,000 council salary.

Touma campaigned on the evils of the opt-out, and while he blamed city personnel for creating the city deficit, he’s partaking of a benefit he condemned before he was elected.

\$180 million in casino funds he helped Dyster to spend; millions of dollars for consultants; \$3.2 million Touma recommended in borrowing for the out of control ice pavilion restoration; \$500,000 to Isaiah 61; \$150,000 for penguins; \$150,000 for the city mission tax problems; more than a million dollars for legal consultants; \$2.2 million for trash totes; funding the SWEET program; \$100,000 parking study; some department heads pay rising over 50% since 2008; his health insurance opt out; and so on.

While the rank and file workers in city government have taken a beating under Dyster while the department heads, Dyster’s favored employees and friends of the mayor’s campaign, have benefited mightily...right along with the consultants and businesses that secure contracts with His Honor over and over at a cost to the taxpayers.

The friends of Dyster receive raises, stipends and endless overtime while “no soup for you, rank and file city employees!” is the management mantra.

The \$50-million-dollar courthouse, the \$44-million-dollar train station and the \$13-million-dollar ice pavilion are just another day at the races.

Touma told Anello that the situation was becoming desperate for the city.

“We can’t afford to pay what we’re paying right now in health care,” he said. “It will be our demise. It’s a big drain on the city.”

Touma is so concerned about the cost of health care to the city that he collects nearly \$200 a week to “opt out” of the city’s health insurance plan because the taxpayers already pay for his health care coverage through the Niagara Falls City School District, where he works as a teacher.

He is one of 48 city employees, elected officials and retirees – nearly all with some tie to the school district – who receive \$9,700 annually and cost the city a whopping \$456,000 a year for doing absolutely nothing. The “opt out” payment in the city of Niagara Falls is far and away the highest in the region.

The mayor would no doubt argue that paying a select group of City Hall insiders nearly a half a million dollars a year is a part of economic development. Surely those chosen 48 will spend the free money they receive in local shops and restaurants, thus helping the retail clerks and waitress-es who are lucky enough to make ten grand a year actually working in Niagara Falls.

What is certain is that Touma’s concern about the cost of health care to the taxpayers of Niagara Falls ends exactly at the point where it begins to benefit him personally.

Touma told the Reporter that taking the opt out actually saves the city money since if he took the health insurance it would cost the city close to \$18,000.

“When taking the opt out I am saving the city 50 percent. I am working extremely hard (as a council member). I think you have to look at the entire health benefit.,” Touma said.

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Obama, Cuomo, Dyster Join Forces To Make Transparency More Blurry

Mike Hudson

Aside from the fact that they all happen to be Democrats, President Barack Obama, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Paul Dyster all have another trait in common – The belief that they can punish members of the press and the news organizations they work for by freezing them out, obstructing the news gathering process in retaliation for anything less than favorable coverage.

The tactic is not new. In fact, it was developed by movie studios and record companies who literally ran reporters out of New York City and Hollywood and bankrupted publications for criticizing their product, a practice that has continued in those places to this day.

But the entertainment industry plays with its' own private money. In the case of Obama, Cuomo and Dyster, the money that goes into creating the "product" – government and the services it provides – is taken forcibly from taxpaying American citizens, who have traditionally relied on the media for an understanding of what their money is being spent on.

This isn't an inside baseball battle that matters only to whiny reporters. It's an issue that goes to the heart of a democratic society. People need information about issues that affect their lives so they can make intelligent decisions about government. They can't do that if the books are cooked.

Problems cited by the journalism groups include: failing to respond to interview requests until way after deadline; requiring public relations staffers to sit in on interviews; blocking contact completely in some instances; requiring reporters to seek permission to interview officials and submit questions in advance; providing only "slick non-answers" from public relations pros rather than allowing unfettered interviews with the principals.

Locally, Dyster has not spoken on the record to the Niagara Falls Reporter in years. He has threatened to sue the newspaper on at least one occasion, only to think the better of heading in to a courtroom, where telling anything less than the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is known as perjury.

Comically, when one of our reporters got a new telephone with different number a few weeks ago and made the routine call for comment on a story, the mayor picked up. He was flummoxed when the journalist identified himself and stated his reason for the call, sputtered out a few words and hung up.

We published his statement exactly as he said it.

On a national level, James Risen, the New York Times reporter who may face jail if he won't testify in a leak case, has called the Obama administration "the greatest enemy of press freedom that we have encountered in at least a generation."

The news media has begun to fight back. An open letter signed by 38 journalism and open gov-ernment organizations accuses the administration of "politically driven suppression of news and information about federal agencies." The coalition calls on the president, who once promised his would be the most transparent administration ever, to clean



Lack of transparency from low to high positions in government seems to be the Democratic way.... Together in obfuscation: B. H. Obama and Paul Dyster

up its act.

The Society of Professional Journalists played a key role in assembling the large coalition supporting the strongly worded letter. David Cuillier, SPJ's president, points out that it's awfully un-usual to get so many journal-

ism outfits to agree on anything — that's how serious the problem has become.

"This isn't hurting the journalists. It's the public," Cuillier said. "We still get paid. We still do our stories. We see it harming the country."

Cuillie gives major credit for the campaign to the persistence of SPJ member and freelance writer Kathryn Foxhall.

"There was no problem getting those signatures" from the wide array of organizations, Foxhall says. "Even people we didn't ask wanted to sign."

Cuomo is clearly cut from the same cloth when it comes to media relations.

Except during weather crises or after transportation accidents, Cuomo hardly ever consents to be interviewed on television. When he does answer questions on the air, it is often by telephone rather than on camera. Unlike most of his predecessors, Cuomo has given his inaugural addresses to small, invitation-only audiences. This year, at the World Trade Center, a guard at the front door shooed away the curious with the words "Not open to the public."

Cuomo has a tense and distant relationship with the Albany press corps. His news conferences, which are sometimes just "gaggles," or scrums in a hallway in the capitol, can be contentious.

Reporters have demanded that Cuomo explain the poor sales of his memoir, "All Things Possible," which was published last fall.

Cuomo's rocky relationship with the press apparently began back when he was working with his father, ex-Gov. Mario Cuomo, decades ago, the book states. Cuomo panned "media outlets, which have become pitchmen for ideologies, creating their own echo chamber ... for those with similar political positions ... The competition places a premium on speed, not accuracy."

In the book, Cuomo noted the "Albany media dubbed" him as "Darth Vader" and the "Prince of Darkness" after he told numerous state workers they were losing their jobs in his father's new ad-ministration. The "Albany media loves to foment 'scandals,'" Cuomo remarked later.

After Cuomo's 2002 campaign for governor crashed, he wrote: "I was horrified to be negatively portrayed in the newspapers again ... Coming after the campaign loss, the papers and my political enemies enjoyed throwing dirt on the grave."

Cuomo does make semi-regular appearances on an Albany-based public-radio interview program, and he used to be a frequent guest on the radio show of Fredric U. Dicker, the longtime Albany correspondent for the New York Post, but the relationship between the two men soured.

On the window of Dicker's office, which faces a well-travelled corridor in the capitol, there is now a photograph of the Governor with a Pinocchio nose and the words "Come clean on Moreland," a reference to the Moreland Commission, which was investigating political corruption in Albany and which Cuomo shut down.

Obama, Cuomo and Dyster want as little transparency as possible in how they go about the work of spending other people's money. That's bad for America, bad for the state of New York and bad for the people of Niagara Falls.

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Niagara Falls Now More Dangerous Than Ever Before, New Study Shows

Mike Hudson

In its' never ending quest to excel at something, Niagara Falls scored a big win of sorts this week. The small town with big dreams was ranked as the 44th Most Dangerous City in the entire United States by a website specializing in information for prospective home buyers and business entrepreneurs.

Previously, what was once known as the Honeymoon Capitol of the World was ranked as the 49th Most Dangerous last year, and 53rd Most Dangerous in 2013.

According to the website NeighborhoodScout.com – which was essentially created to help people decide where they might want to live and do business – there were 3,460 crimes committed in the small city of 49,468 souls, nearly 600 of which were violent offenses.

What makes NeighborhoodScout's analysis more comprehensive than others is the fact that the website takes into account all 17,000 law enforcement agencies in America for each city with a population more than

25,000.

Many cities across the country, including Niagara Falls, are served by more than one agency: they include municipal police, county sheriff, transit police, university or campus police, public school police, park and port police, tribal police, and more. By using this unique method, we're able to provide an accurate and holistic representation of total crime known to occur within a city or town – not just those reported by a single agency.

“Once this complete count of known crimes is assembled for each city in America, we leveled the playing field by dividing the number of violent crimes by the population of each city, divided by 1,000,” the website states. “This reveals the violent crime rate per 1,000 population, allowing us to compare and rank the cities. The results are eye-opening.”

The most notable myth shot down by the new study is the perception that large cities are the only places that are dangerous. But high violent crime rates are less about city size than they are about economic issues that drive away the educated and affluent as they pursue employment elsewhere, and draw in

and retain the less well-off and less mobile, the report states.

That is certainly the case in Niagara Falls, the most heavily taxed municipality in the most heavily taxed state in the nation. Poverty and street level crime have become big business here, with most of the top earners in the city being members of the police department, the fire department or the higher ups in the school district and various social service agencies tax payers support to deal with society's debitage.

According to the report, 12 out of every 1,000 residents can expect to become the victim of a violent crime over a 12-month period, while 58 out of every 1,000 will be victimized by some sort of property crime.

Overall in New York State, just four out of every 1,000 people will become a violent crime victim in any given year, a difference of 300 per cent.

Despite the fact that city police officers constitute the majority of the 69 city employees who make more than \$100,000 a year, Niagara Falls is a hotbed of street crime. Increasingly, tourists and lo-cals alike are likely

to become the victims of violent or property crime.

The report states that just 3 percent of municipalities across the entire country are more dangerous than Niagara Falls, including Camden, NJ, which ranked number one on the most dangerous list.

Buffalo also fared poorly in the newest NeighborhoodScout.com study, jumping nine positions from being the 40th Most Dangerous City in 2014 to the number 31 spot this past year. In 2015, according to data found on the website, there were 16,444 crimes in the 258,959 person city — over 3,300 of which were reported as violent.

As with so many things on the Niagara Frontier, the growing problem of street crime just keeps getting worse with each passing year. Those who have to live here know it is dangerous. It is only the politicians and others with a vested interest in pretending everything is all right who insist otherwise.

Clearly, whatever it is the elected and appointed leadership of the region has been doing to fix the problem has not been working.

When It Comes To “Tabloids” Size Matters

Anna Howard

Why is everyone reading that damn tabloid?”

“How did that tabloid become the go-to news source in this city?”

“It's just a tabloid. Don't believe a word of it.”

We've heard it all before but lately we're hearing it more than ever. While The Reporter has gotten deep under the skin of those whom we cover our newspaper has also gotten deep into the consciousness of the local community. Yes, our TABLOID has made an indelible impression on those individuals and institutions that we report on. And nothing convinces us more that we're fighting the good fight than when we hear people hissing the word “tabloid” through clenched teeth, as if it were four letters instead of seven letters, describing the newspaper's size.

Yes, the word “tabloid” is nothing more than a physical description of a publication that is approximately half the size of a traditional “broadsheet” newspaper. Most newspapers in England are tabloids. Some are tame many are lively or controversial. The New York Post and New York Daily News are tabloids. The Post is rather snarky and the News is more toned down. Both papers routinely irritate and entertain while informing readers.

While the critics of the Reporter think they're accurately describing the paper by calling it a “tab-loid” they're only stating the obvious: the Reporter is printed in tabloid format. Nothing more and nothing less. No matter how deeply some people dislike the Reporter and no matter how hard they try to wish us into the journalism cornfield the facts are that the paper is quite popular. Deal with it.

In any event we have no plans to go away any time soon because there's too much go-



ing on and we're determined to keep reporting on it. We'll keep covering the news that other media outlets find too inconvenient to

go near. And if that makes some people uncomfortable, we make no apologies.

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Dyster, City Council Pleased With “Public Art” Especially When It’s At “Public Expense”

James Hufnagel

One-time Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill had a favorite saying when he had to accede anything of legislative significance to the Reagan administration, which was not infrequently, given the political skills of “the Gipper”.

“You know,” O’Neill would say, “the Irish gave the Scottish the bagpipes as a joke, and the Scots took it seriously.”

It appears to us that the Buffalo artistic elite is playing a joke on the city of Niagara Falls, considering the recent selection of an abstract “sculpture” that is soon to adorn the traffic circle at Third and Rainbow Blvd, and with a price tag of \$435,000, it’s clear somebody wants us to take it seriously, that somebody being Mayor Dyster and his city council.

“Really? You’re trying to tell me that \$435,000K could not have been better spent? How about taking that money and bulldozing some of the hundreds of abandoned houses?” asked an anonymous commenter on the Buffalo News website.

In fairness, the city of Niagara Falls’ share of the total cost is “only” \$50,000. The remaining funds are to come from USA Niagara and the Niagara Greenway, contributing taxpayer and NYPA ratepayer dollars respectively, which, on the merits of being administered by state agencies, are generally regarded here as free money.

According to news reports, the Curator of Public Art at Buffalo’s Albright-Knox Art Gallery, an individual by the name of Aaron Ott, was instrumental in bringing together the city, USA Niagara and sculptor Jeff Laramore, who was ultimately chosen to create the towering steel structure. Painted red, white and blue and overwhelming the traffic circle, the piece will present a stark contrast

to its surroundings, which include the stately facade of the Hotel Niagara.

Curator Ott’s LinkedIn page states that his “curatorial philosophy is grounded in the notion that the shared landscape of our lives is abundant with the opportunity to create, experience, and talk about notions of beauty, culture, originality and innovation. Art that is generous in spirit, conceptually affirmative, and participatory in format will serve as the heart of the Public Art Initiative. Mr. Ott’s goal as Curator of Public Art is to create spaces of dialogue where our diverse communities have the ability to socially engage, actively respond, and cooperatively produce great public art that is capable of empowering individuals, generating stronger neighborhoods and establishing our entire region as a critical cultural center...” And so on.

Ott’s 2014 appointment at Albright-Knox was entirely in keeping with its new focus on obtaining “modern” art, funded primarily by selling off its inventory of classic medieval and Renaissance works as well as ancient Roman, Indian and Chinese artifacts. The change of mission at Albright-Knox caused a near sensation a decade ago. Many museum members and leaders of the Buffalo arts community thought the transition ill-advised, to put it mildly.

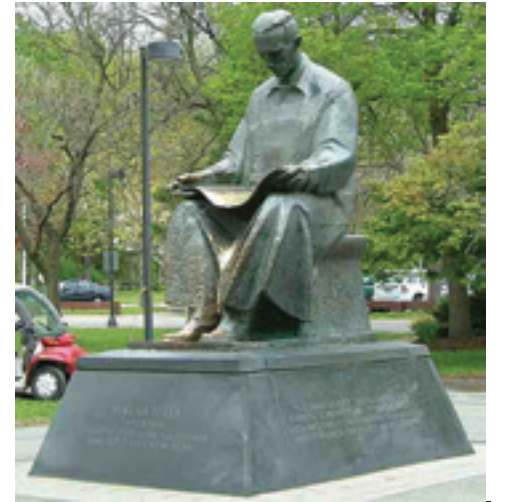
“They sold off all their beautiful things, all their timeless things, to buy a bunch of crap,” one successful local artist told us.

On an interesting side note, despite the exceptionally temperate weather that was visited on the area through late December, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for some reason has not yet demolished the pedestal of the Nikola Tesla sculpture on Goat Island and moved the statue temporarily indoors for restoration, something that they had announced would occur in November.



NTCC chief John Percy once remarked at a meeting that the Tesla statue would not fit in the Rainbow Blvd. traffic circle, however, the Boundary Waters sculpture will measure 38 feet tall and 35 feet wide. Considering the attractiveness of the Boundary Waters public artwork, some have suggested it be placed in a different location.

Many wanted to see Tesla installed at the same traffic circle, but Mayor Dyster turned down talks with State Parks to obtain the statue, which is valued at nearly a half million dollars. State Parks publicly offered to discuss the possibility with local officials after



The statue of Nikola Tesla may have been a more dignified and better public art – at a lower cost to taxpayers – for the traffic circle on Rainbow Blvd.

the Niagara Falls City Council, the Niagara County Legislature and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area board all passed resolutions asking for it, but Dyster refused to act on the proposal.

Why accept a free masterpiece when you have a half million bucks to throw at an out-of-town artist?

Not to mention reinforcing the mayor’s preoccupation with all things Irish, rather, Buffalo.



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Grandinetti Defends Her Mayor By Targeting “Disloyal, Disruptive, Unproductive” Employees For Removal

Anna Howard

Goodness gracious what was councilwoman Kristen Grandinetti thinking as she put pen to paper, or cursor to screen, to write her Gazette January 11, guest view titled, “The resumes are in”? The column heartily defended Mayor Dyster’s pre-Christmas call for a review of department head re-sumes. Dyster’s demand for his top people to submit resumes and letters of intent was first reported on by the Reporter and later used without attribution by other media. No matter, the Re-porter sees this sort of story “borrowing” as the highest form of journalism flattery.

We’ve gone to bat for councilwoman Grandinetti in the past. Most recently we supported her by calling upon her council comrades to select her as 2016 chairwoman. Our call failed to turn turn the heads of the men on the council. Sadly our efforts also failed to nudge Ms. Grandinetti to nominate herself for chairwoman two weeks ago as the 2015 chairman, Andrew Touma, was chosen to remain as the 2016 chairman.

While the councilwoman seemingly had little confidence in her ability to snare the chair her guest view expressed tremendous confidence in the ability of Mayor Dyster to guide Niagara Falls in his third term. Although she wrote glowingly of the mayor’s



Kristen Grandinetti addresses a gathering.

leadership ability we are hard pressed to recall the mayor as ever having publicly recommended Ms. Grandinetti for chairwoman. God bless the councilwoman, she doesn’t understand that politics is a blood sport where fair play is never seen as a political asset. It’s seen as a sign of weakness that leads to invisibility. Invisibility that translates into being denied the council chair three years in a row.

All of that being said we wish to draw attention to the third paragraph of her guest view: “There are changes that can and should

be made. There are people whose value should be made known to them and there are others who are disruptive, disloyal and unproductive.” It would seem that the councilwoman has specific city employees in mind who deserve termination. Exactly who are these bureaucratic foul balls in Paul Dyster’s city hall? And what’s going on here with her call for disruptive, disloyal, and unproductive heads to roll? After all the council isn’t supposed to engage in personnel management.

We believe the mystery becomes somewhat less mysterious when you view Kristen’s Gazette column of January 11 in light of Mayor Dyster’s remarks in a Gazette January 10, article headed, “Mayor Dyster says he’ll make decision on department heads at end of month.” It almost looks as if the councilwoman’s column and the mayor’s remarks were coordinated.

A cynical political observer would be tempted to conclude that Grandinetti’s remarks about “disruptive, disloyal and unproductive” employees were written to provide

cover and credibility for the mayor. Did the mayor order up the Grandinetti editorial in order to lend justification to his soon to be announced terminations? After all, if city hall is rampant with “disruptive, disloyal and unproductive” employees then who could blame the mayor for rolling a few highly paid heads?

The councilwoman’s harsh assessment of unidentified Dyster administration employees has made it difficult, if not impossible, for the mayor to now terminate anyone without said termination appearing to have been made because the employee was a disruptive, disloyal or unproductive...bum. One of those foul balls that should have been hit out of the park well before now. Which prompts a couple of basic questions: If city hall is loaded with such low performing and untrustworthy individuals how did they get there in the first place and how have they stayed for so long?

In any event, and if Mayor Dyster and Kristen Grandinetti are to be believed, the city hall slackers will be identified and removed by the end of the month.



This is the great fact: strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery: weakness is death.

Know that all sins and all evils can be summed up in that one word, weakness. It is weakness that is the motive power in all evil doing; it is weakness that is the source of all selfishness; it is weakness that makes men injure others; it is weakness that makes them manifest what they are not in reality.

All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that; do not believe that you are weak; do not believe that you are half-crazy lunatics as most of us believe now-a-days. You can do anything and everything, without even the guidance of any one.

Swami Vivekananda

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King Con Shmueli: Fact Or Fiction?

Frank Parlato

Several readers have commented that my series on Shmuel Shmueli must be a fabrication.

No one could be such a rascal.

Others have said I am picking on a nice Jewish man and could I provide some proof that Shmueli is half the scalawag that I paint him to be?

I was cut to the quick by the suggestion that I had exaggerated the cupidity of Shmueli.

Before giving detailed dates and quotes, I will skim through the long list of people he screwed in the past who took judgments against him or sued him in vain. Since he never paid one of them it seems almost irrelevant.

Start with his Brooklyn, NY, Hebrew language newspaper employees who did not get paid, Dr. Yossi Gamzu, Meyer Bendet, Joseph Billig, Boaz Gabbai, Uri Lehavi or Noam Niv.

Yori Yanover, a writer for Shmueli, summed it up best when he wrote for the JewishPress.com, "Shmuel Shmueli.... bounced checks like he was one of the five openers of the Harlem Globe Trotters."

I will skip the details of vendors Shmueli stiffed like Expedi Printing, Mid Atlantic Graphics, Banco Popular, Verizon, and Sprint. They could afford to take the hit.

And let us look kindly past the people in Israel that trusted this fine, orthodox Jewish man like Nechama Goldman, Amos Bahat, Amos Carmeli and Eitan Eldar.

And I'll only mention the people who foolishly gave him credit in Brooklyn like Alan Resnick and Daniel Spitz.

And space does not permit a close look at the \$24 million judgement Shmueli owes Haaretz Daily Newspapers, Maariv Modin Publishing Co., Ltd., and the Publication Group, Inc. of Los Angeles for stealing their work for years. Or the lawyers who defended Shmueli in his copyright infringement lawsuit, like Moskowitz & Book, Andrew Paul Cooper and Jon Lefkowitz.

They'll live.

And we may as well also brush past Jacob and Eva Fuhrman who he cheated out of moving into their home and who won a judgement of \$56,668.81 against Shmueli, which of course Shmueli did not pay.

Instead, let's talk about his lawyers he retained to sue me.

Starting in 2007, Shmueli commenced a series of 10 lawsuits against me and my partner Larry Reger.

While we won all of the lawsuits, it cost us more than \$1 million in legal fees. By the way, Shmueli had a significant advantage. While we paid our lawyers, he didn't.

Here is a brief timeline.

2008

Shmueli retained Zdarsky Sawicki and Agostinelli.

2009

May: Shmueli retained Anderson and Anderson of Ghanzou, China.

July: Shmueli retained Jaeckle Fleishmann and Mugel.

Aug: Shmueli retained HoganWillig.

2010

FEB 22: He stopped paying Zdarsky, Sawicki & Agostinelli. They sought to withdraw as Shmueli's counsel and sought a



He appears to be a holy man. But there are those who say he is quite the opposite. Just ask any of several dozen sadder-but-wiser lawyers.

retaining lien for unpaid invoices totaling \$141,769.66.

May 16: HoganWillig had racked up 500 billable hours with unpaid legal fees of \$114,712.92. When Shmueli disputed he owed anything, HoganWillig agreed to settle for \$54,597.

Shmueli tendered two checks drawn on an account of the Hang Seng Bank of Hong Kong totaling \$54,597 to HoganWillig who deposited the checks in their bank account.

Corey Hogan was to later write to the judge to explain what happened next: "Mr. Shmueli, secretly and without cause, stopped payment on two checks.... and our office was not informed until approximately 6 weeks later (because the check was not drawn on a US bank). At first, Mr. Shmueli expressly denied that he had stopped payment."

June 30: Making his efforts to stiff lawyers truly international, Shmueli stopped paying his Chinese lawyers, Anderson and Anderson.

He received several dunning emails from Ms. Wu Xiaoping of the Finance Department: [June 30] "You promised to settle our outstanding bills many times.... Please note that you must settle these outstanding bills immediately.

[July 13] "We hope you are now in a position to immediately pay the balance of the money outstanding to our firm, some of which go back to January of this year.

[July 19] "Mr. Buxbaum tried to call you, but there is no answer. Where are you? We need your payment urgently."

[July 21] "You have not have the courtesy of paying this bill over this long period. We trust you, since you appear to be a friend of Mr. Buxbaum. However, you have not rewarded our trust. Payment in full is not made today we will consider what action to take.

[July 23] "You said you would call Mr. Buxbaum, but he never receive your call. We can not keep waiting for these long overdue payments."

[July 29]

"Re: Outstanding Bills of US\$57,047.75 (HK\$444,972.45) We have not received payment for the above outstanding bills. We are shocked by your unethical behavior, we will take legal action against you immediately, unless payment in full is received this week."

[Nov. 11] "You appear to be played

games. You made an appointment in Hong Kong with our senior lawyer, and you do not bother to show up, claiming you are not in Hong Kong. We will bill you for the time Mr. Buxbaum wasted as result of your acts.... It is clear you have no intention of honoring your financial and moral obligations."

Sept 8: Meanwhile back in the USA, Shmueli hired a new lawyer -- to sue his old lawyers. Andrew Lavoot Bluestone of NYC was retained for "a matter of legal malpractice and to defend an attorney fee dispute. It is anticipated that the opposing entities in these cases will be Zdarsky, Sawicki & Agostinelli, LLP, HoganWillig PLLC and Jaeckle, Fleischmann & Mugel LLP."

Sept. 10: HoganWillig obtained a judgment against Shmueli for \$114,712.92. Hogan wrote in an affidavit, Shmueli has "a history of engaging in a pattern and practice of engaging firms to provide legal services to them at their request and then refusing to pay for the services provided.... This was the case with Zdarsky, Sawicki & Agostinelli LLP It our understanding that Defendants did the same thing to Blair & Roach and a Manhattan law firm....

Meanwhile Anderson and Anderson's David Buxbaum wrote to Hogan hoping he could tell him where to find him: "Mr. Shmueli ... engaged our firm to provide legal services despite an agreement to remit payment for the legal services rendered, Mr. Shmueli failed to make payment and went into hiding. If you know where he presently reside, please inform us...."

Nov 9: Justice Caruso set the retaining lien for Zdarsky against Shmueli at \$97,000. Shmueli countersued Zdarsky for malpractice and breach of fiduciary duty.

Dec 21: Anderson & Anderson commenced a lawsuit in the NYS Supreme Court in Niagara County against Shmueli to recover legal fees in the amount of \$57,047.75.

2011

June 22: On the same day that Judge Frank Caruso fixed a retaining lien for Jaeckle Fleishmann at \$44,000 for Shmueli's unpaid legal fees to them, Shmueli retained a new law firm, Kloss Stenger & LoTempio to represent him.

2012

June: Shmueli stopped paying Kloss Stenger & LoTempio. David Kloss wrote to

Judge Ralph Boniello seeking to withdraw since Shmueli "refuses to pay for legal services and disbursements incurred since January 10, 2012.... Further, during the course of our representation, Mr. Shmueli repeatedly made meritless derogatory and defamatory statements, verbal and written, pertaining to Joseph J. Marusak's integrity, which seriously eroded the relationship of trust between KSL and the plaintiff."

Aug 16: While Shmueli continued his lawsuit against Zdarsky's firm, their attorney, Lawrence Vilardo wrote to the court: "(T) here is no end in sight to (Shmueli's) shell game...."

Dec 26: Meanwhile Bluestone, the New York City lawyer Shmueli hired to sue other lawyers, requested permission from the judge to withdraw.

Bluestone wrote, "My legal bills for August, September, October and November have not been paid, nor have my travel expenses. I cannot afford to represent clients who do not pay their bills.... I have asked Mr. Shmueli to pay my bills and to get a new attorney, but he refuses."

2014

Jan 14: Shmueli entered into a retainer agreement with Kazlow and Kazlow.

Feb 11: Shmueli signed a revised retainer

Gene Kazlow wrote, "The reason why the retainer agreement was revised was that I had learned that certain representations made to me by Mr. Shmueli concerning the status of settlement discussions in the case, on which I had based the compensation structure in the initial agreements, were false."

Mar 4: Kazlow requested from Justice Timothy Walker permission to withdraw.

"It was "clear that our attorney-client relationship was in deep trouble.... The Court may discern from Mr. Shmueli's affidavit the level to which the attorney-client relationship between Kazlow & Kazlow and plaintiff has deteriorated in that Mr. Shmueli speaks of pursuing claims against Kazlow & Kazlow, and me personally, even though, to the best of my knowledge, Kazlow & Kazlow has not done anything to injure plaintiff. Obviously, Kazlow & Kazlow should not be required to remain in the case under such circumstances."....

To be continued....



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— Francis of Assisi

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Cult Of NXIVM Series Part 8: The Relentless Pursuit Of Enemies

Frank Parlato

XIVM leader Keith Raniere made it clear that for NXIVM to thrive, its enemies must be destroyed. Lawsuits and criminal indictments were the weapons of choice.

When I worked there, most of the lawyers made it known they despised NXIVM. But they loved the pay. Lawyers are funny: They disliked the injustice Raniere wanted to purchase, but they loved having a million-dollar client who would pay them for injustice.

Here is an example:

Toni Natalie had been Raniere's lover for eight years, (1992-1999) and she helped him launch National Health Network in 1994, a follow up to his failed Consumers Buyline pyramid scheme. Raniere also set up a health food shop in Clifton, NY and put it in his beloved girlfriend Natalie's name. Raniere had told Natalie that he was monogamous and that he would father a child with her who would change the world. They never had the child and but she did find out that he secretly slept with his female followers—some of whom were underage.

When Natalie left him Raniere pleaded with her to come back; he wrote her a love-sick letter [published on my web-site www.frankreport.com], laced with threats of her imprisonment or death if she did not return.

She claims Raniere's female followers, "broke into my house; they would come and ring the doorbell at all hours of the day or night. They would tell me that I had to come with them, that he was dying, that if I didn't stay with him, he was going to die."

It soon became evident Natalie wasn't going to return and in revenge she was sued repeatedly over accusations related to the health food shop, which had failed and closed. When her legal bills exceeded her assets, Raniere hired lawyers to block her bankruptcy. That went on for eight years. In 2003, US bankruptcy Judge Robert Littlefield wrote: "This matter smacks of a jilted fellow's attempt at revenge or retaliation against his former girlfriend, with many attempts at tripping her up along the way."

Unable to block her bankruptcy, Raniere assigned Kristin Keffe, a longtime NXIVM member and mother of Raniere's son, to investigate her. Keffe, (who has since fled the cult with her son), compiled a 25-page report – delving into Natalie's family, her husband, the restaurant chain they operated, credit-card statements, lease invoices and more. When it was released to the Village Voice, the reporter called it "almost frightening in its level of detail".

During this onslaught – funded by Bronfman millions, Raniere hired Interfor, a private investigation firm, to spy on Natalie in her home. Raniere had a lawyer contact the US Attorney and the FBI to encourage an investigation. FBI agents showed up at her home, Natalie said. Evidence recently uncovered strongly indicates Raniere planned a scheme to lure Natalie to Mexico where she was to have been arrested through the influence of NXVIM leader Emiliano Salinas, the son of former Mexican President Carlos Salinas.

A second example:



Keith Raniere, lying in bed, cooking up schemes to destroy his enemies.

After Natalie left, Barbara Bouchey was Raniere's lover for nine years (2000-2009). Bouchey was also told by Raniere she would have a child with him that would change the world. Of course that never happened. Bouchey was a NXIVM board member and the financial manager of top ranking NXIVM members. Raniere "borrowed" more than \$1.6 million from her and lost it [he says] in bad investments. According to Bouchey, when she asked to be repaid, he said he thought it was a gift.

Within two years of leaving, Raniere had Clare Bronfman and NXIVM sue Bouchey six times using six different law firms. They accused her of misappropriation of funds and extortion (for asking for her \$1.6 million back). She was also called as a witness in four other cases against other enemies, in three states, before eight judges, resulting in over 800 filings, containing over 16,000 pages. The cost of Bouchey's lawyers exceeded \$400,000. She declared bankruptcy.

Bouchey wrote to one judge that what NXIVM did to her "should be considered criminal ... Their abuse of the legal system and the vendetta sought on individuals such as myself needs to stop."

More examples:

Another target was former NXIVM consultant Joseph O'Hara, who quit in 2005 when he said he discovered Raniere was involved in tax evasion schemes and that he hired private investigators to illegally spy on his enemies.

Raniere launched a series of lawsuits that plunged O'Hara into bankruptcy. In 2007, O'Hara was targeted for, allegedly, swindling the Bronfmans out of an investment on a land deal. The Bronfmans spent more money suing O'Hara than he allegedly took from them.

But Raniere wanted O'Hara indicted on a criminal offence. Somehow Kristin M. Keffe, [the same woman who compiled the report on Natalie], was permitted by the Albany County DA, David Soares, to work as a special volunteer in his office to help build a case against O'Hara—she even had her own desk.

An Albany County grand jury indicted O'Hara on a charge of grand larceny. But a judge threw out the case citing insufficient evidence.

Raniere was disappointed. In September 2007, Raniere offered me a large bonus



From lover to enemy, Barbara Bouchey became the target of Keith Raniere's hatred.

if I could initiate efforts to get O'Hara re-indicted. While I was considering the offer, I learned that I had been misled by Raniere about the facts of the case. I concluded it was a civil matter, not a criminal case and declined to pursue the O'Hara indictment. My decision was irrelevant since I was soon fired when I uncovered other likely illegal activities Raniere committed on unrelated matters.

After I left, however, I revealed to interested parties that Soares had allowed Keffe to secretly work at the DA's office. When Soares ran for reelection his opponent publicized the fact that DA Soares allowed a NXIVM employee to volunteer at his office and have access to secret grand jury information on a NXIVM legal target. His opponent accused Soares of selling out his office to NXIVM to hunt down their enemy. It got considerable traction in local media and almost tipped the election away from the incumbent.

In early 2012, using information I provided to reporter James Odato and a great deal of his own independent investigation, the Albany Times Union published an investigative series — Secrets of NXIVM, which won an AP award for reporting. The Times Union series included comments from various sources confirming that Raniere is pedophile, an abuser of women, and a man who uses litigation to punish adversaries. It also revealed in gripping detail how Seagram heiresses, Clare and Sara Bronfman fund Raniere's efforts.

Keeping lawyers busy:

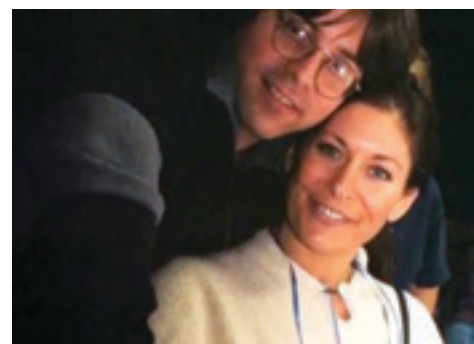
Shortly after the Times Union series ran, however, the New York State police commenced a criminal investigation into whether one or more people accessed NXIVM's password protected website without authorization. The suspects: Bouchey, Natalie, O'Hara and a blogger, John Tighe, had been named as sources in the Times Union series. Tighe ran a blog called Saratoga in Decline that frequently criticized NXIVM.

The computer trespass investigation was assigned to State Police investigator, Rodger Kirsopp in April 2012. Kirsopp was to soon find out that NXIVM's attorneys, Stephen R. Coffey, Pamela Nichols and Michael P. McDermott were driving the case.

McDermott was the former chief assistant District Attorney for Albany County under David Soares before entering private



Keith Raniere, leader of the Cult of NXIVM, has a stunning, philosophical epiphany.



Happier days. A loving Keith Raniere, with Toni Natalie. Later his love turned to bitter hate and he tormented this woman for 16 years.

practice in 2007.

Police records show NXIVM attorneys were in contact with Kirsopp dozens of times, attending interviews with Raniere and other NXIVM employees, delivering documents, computer records and hiring investigators and computer experts to get evidence to use in the case.

Kirsopp's 17,000 word report on the investigation reveals hundreds of instances where NXIVM attorneys pushed a minor computer trespass case into a major felony investigation.

"I met with [NXIVM attorney] Coffey at SP Clifton Park who inquired on the status of this investigation and whether there would be search warrants of the suspects computers prior to or at the time of arrest," Kirsopp wrote on Aug. 6, 2012. He added that Coffey requested the suspects be arrested, rather than issued appearance tickets.

"I received a call from [NXIVM] Atty McDermott who requested action by 9/10/12 in case the offense only rises to misdemeanor level due to the statute of limitations," states another report Kirsopp filed on Aug. 27.

When Raniere was interviewed by Kirsopp, with NXIVM attorneys present, Raniere said his ex-lover, Natalie, had "mob connections" but "was unable to provide specific names or knowledge of the connection," Kirsopp wrote.

After months of investigating the computer trespass, the Saratoga County District Attorney declined to prosecute. Kirsopp asked the New York State Attorney General to prosecute.

The Attorney General turned down the case. According to Kirsopp's notes, "This information was passed along to (NXIVM) Attorney Pam Nichols."

With state police unable to get anyone to prosecute, McDermott presented the case to his former boss at the Albany DA's office.

Raniere uses Bronfman millions to destroy ex-lovers



Profile of a deviant? Keith Raniere, leader of NXIVM, has been accused of abusing dozens of women and raping several underage girls.



Albany County District Attorney, David Soares, seems to be ready, willing and able to assist Raniere's vendettas.



Clare Bronfman, the sinister enabler of Raniere's vengeful schemes, has funded Raniere. She may be on the hook for large scale, massive tax evasion, which even her millions may not be able to buy off.

But DA Soares, remembered the embarrassing controversy over his NXIVM "volunteer" and O'Hara five years before, chose to become the third prosecutor to decline the case.

But the lawyers crafted a solution. Soares would claim a conflict of interest and the case would be referred to a "special prosecutor" in Albany.

That special prosecutor was Holly Trexler, a former Albany County assistant district attorney who, before entering private practice, worked under Soares and McDermott.

Finally, justice was to be purchased. Search warrants were issued; the computers of Natalie, O'Hara and Tighe were seized.

With the help of NXIVM computer experts it was discovered that the targets may have accessed the website. State Police wound up charging them along with Bouchey with E-Felony criminal charges for computer

trespass. It hadn't been easy. It wasn't cheap. Based on what I know of the monthly costs NXIVM paid for lawyers and private investigators, I estimate it cost Clare Bronfman \$2 million to get the four indicted for essentially rooting around a web-site that hundreds of people had passwords to access.

When New York State police seized blogger Tighe's hard drive from his computer, they unexpectedly found evidence of child pornography. Tighe took a plea deal and is serving five years and 10 months in federal prison on child pornography charges. He also pleaded guilty to the computer trespass charge and was sentenced to a year in jail to be served concurrently with his federal sentence.

Raniere, who is accused by several women of having sex with them when they were

against Bouchey, Natalie and O'Hara has not been settled and recent evidence suggests that Clare Bronfman may have perjured herself in court filings about the dates of discovery of the alleged computer trespass.

The remaining defendants have made motions to have the case dismissed. Sources familiar with the case say the evidence is so flimsy that the state may offer an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal for all of them.

Still, Raniere can boast of victory. He further disrupted the lives of his ex-lovers and got them indicted. Created great fear and cost to them. And weakened them for his next attack against them.

The hypocrite, Raniere, loves to speak of compassion. He says, "Humans can be noble. The question is: Will we put forth what is necessary?"

He says, "When we smile, the world smiles with us: each experience of joy is an experience of joy for all people and a victory for human kind."

Yet he has made many people he once promised to love weep.

The relentlessly vengeful Raniere and his enablers the Bronfman sisters are the people the government is calling vic-tims in their federal indictment against me. Did they purchase justice in my case?

It is my job to show who the real victim and the real criminals are. Stay tuned, there is much more to follow...

under the age of 16, was able to gloat over the prosecution of Tighe who had child porn videos. Ironically, I recently uncovered that Raniere may have had a teenage boy take video of Raniere's sexual episodes with his underage sisters.

Meantime, the computer trespass case

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Membership Set For CO. Manager Search; Sources Say Updegrove May Be Offered Position

LOCKPORT— Niagara County is looking for a new county manager to replace Jeffrey Glatz who handed in his resignation recently and will retire shortly.

As long ago as late Spring last year there were rumblings about 2015 being Glatz's final year with the county.

Now the membership of the Niagara County Manager search committee has been finalized, Niagara-ra County Legislature Chairman Wm. Keith McNall, R-Lockport, announced.

The addition of Lockport teacher Kevin Clark, who has been a high school instructor for 35 years, rounds out the eight-member committee.

Clark, one of two community members appointed, joins Legislators John Syracuse, R-Newfane, who chairs the committee, Tony Nemi, R-Lockport, Michael A. Hill, R-Middleport, Dennis F. Virtuo-so, D-Niagara Falls, Jason A. Zona, D-Niagara Falls, Owen T. Steed, D-Niagara Falls, and Niagara Falls restaurateur Michael Capizzi, the other community member advising lawmakers on the search.

"When your community asks you to volunteer and to help improve the lives and experience of county residents, it's a duty and an obligation," Clark said. "Our county taxpayers and our county workforce deserve effective leadership, and I know this committee will work to achieve that re-sult."

Clark, who is also Lockport High School's varsity swimming coach, serves on the boards of directors of the Lockport Family YMCA and the Lockport Schools Federal Credit Union, and the board of trustees of New Directions Youth and Family Services.

While the committee will make recommendations, it is up to the Republican controlled legislature to make the final pick.

Informed sources tell the Reporter that former Niagara County majority leader, Rick Updegrove, who did not seek re-election may be the Republicans first choice for the job.

"The 'search committee' is just for public consumption," our source says.

Updegrove is a lawyer and, by all accounts, is capable enough.

Many also feel that Glatz did his job well.

Updegrove was considered by more than

a few to be the hardest working and smartest of legisla-tors.

If he gets the nod for the \$100,000 plus per year job, things may get lively, especially if he has the full support of the real Republican powerhouses – George Maziarz and Henry Wojtasek.

With the power behind him, and with his experience as a legislator and an attorney, Updegrove, as one source says, will be guiding the Republican caucus as much or more so than vice versa.

That is not to say that Updegrove has applied or will be selected.

Someone may just come out of the woodwork – someone with talent; someone who you would least expect to submit his resume.

And then again – maybe the Reporter will call it on the nose: Updegrove.

Time will tell.

Hopefully such good things as reducing taxes and streamlining government will be top of the list considerations for whoever the next manager turns out to be.



A fine choice: Rick Updegrove for County Manager?

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Tompkins Explains Position On Ending Council Health Insurance And His Decision To Accept Health Insurance

Kenny Tompkins

During my campaign, I focused on ways in which to reduce the city's financial footprint and save tax payers' money.

One way was to reduce or eliminate the health care benefits and insurance opt-out payments for part-time elected officials and part-time political appointees (like the civil service commissioner).

On Monday, January 11, 2016, the Niagara Falls City Council passed two resolutions. The first resolution, which defined city employees not included under the collective bargaining agreement as full time employees, was unanimously passed.

The second resolution, which was to eliminate the health care benefit for part-time elected officials and political appointees, narrowly passed 3-2.

As such, new council members elected or part time commissioners appointed after January 1, 2016 are not eligible to enroll in the city's health care plan or to take opt out payments in lieu of coverage.

I believe this is a step in the right direction for this fiscally strapped city. As Chairman Andy Touma noted during the vote, we have to start looking at all entities and ensure that we are saving money. Currently, the insurance coverage offered cost approximately \$21K a year for family coverage and around \$7.6K for single coverage. This is only ex-



Kenny Tompkins, the freshman Niagara Falls council member, has led the charge to eliminate health insurance for future council members.

pected to rise. New employees contribute 10% of the premium cost.

If a council member chooses not to accept the insurance coverage, he or she may receive a cash sum of approximately \$4K (single) or \$10K (family) for opting out of the program. Let's do the math: If all five council members and part time appointees were to accept either the buyout or the insurance coverage, the cost per year would span between \$50K (if all eligible only took the buyout) to

\$125K (if all enrolled in the family plan).

This is a small amount compared to other city expenses. However, as we continue to lose revenue while our overall costs increase, in the future, this savings will become more significant to tax payers. This is especially true when added to other cost saving measures. Already, this resolution applies to the civil service commissioner post.

Many people have asked me directly why this program only applies to officials or appointees elected after January 1, 2016.

In writing this resolution, I worked with the corporation counsel office who advised that any changes to compensation could have legal ramifications. In other words, those who were elected to office or appointed prior to this date could expect this as part of their compensation. I understand this perspective, which is why the resolution was presented effective from this date forward.

I respect Councilmen Ezra Scott and Charles Walker for their arguments against this plan. Both gentlemen did bring forth valid points about whether or not this would discourage individuals from running for office.

I respect that while this is considered a part-time job, the obligations are likely to be full-time. Again, I still believe this is a calling, one that you choose to accept regardless of the compensation offered.

Now, as many of you know, this was no longer as easy a resolution for me to bring forth as it was during the campaign. When

I was running for office, I had insurance and had no intention myself of accepting the buy-out. However, the situation suddenly changed four weeks ago. In mid-December, I found out that my family would be without insurance coverage at a time in which it became critical that we had access to a plan. This plan hence became a life boat.

I graciously accept any criticism this decision generates.

Like Chairman Touma, I believe benefits are just one area that is ripe for change moving forward given our city's financial outlook. I look forward to working with the chairman and the council as we collectively find ways in which to ensure this city is operating efficiently and money is being responsibly appropriated to areas that make a difference in our residents' quality of life.



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Websites Ranks Niagara Falls Third Worst- But That's Their Opinion

These days every other website is doing rankings.

And website ranking opinions are like certain anatomical parts – everybody has one or two of them.

So this website called Road Snacks decides to rank cities in New York State and using their yardstick – Niagara Falls is the third worst place to live in New York State.

So what?

They don't live here. Maybe they haven't even spent a day here. It doesn't mean too much, but here is what they wrote anyway:

<http://www.roadsnacks.net/worst-places-to-live-in-new-york-state/>

to-live-in-new-york-state/

“Niagara Falls is the third most dangerous place in the state of New York. We're not talking about falling over the cliffs. And yes, pick pocketers preying on unsuspecting tourists is probably a high number of those crimes. But the fact remains, that when you're within Niagara Falls city limits, you have a 1 in 17 chance of being robbed or having something you own vandalized.

Does that sound like a fun place to live? Did you know Niagara Falls also has the 4th highest unemployment rate in the state at 8.1%? Or that homes are only valued at \$57,000?

Say what you want about cheap living. The fact is, homes are priced by demand, and there's little demand to live in Niagara Falls.

Here are the top 10 worst place accord-



ing to the website: roadsnacks:

They write: “After analyzing 500 of the state's most populous cities (over 5,000 people), we came up with this list as the 10 worst places to live in the state of New York”

1. Richland
2. Albion
3. Niagara Falls

4. Oneida
5. Johnstown
6. Gloversville
7. Elmira
8. Herkimer
9. Utica
10. Watertown

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OPEN MIC @ 9PM FREE

WED JAN 20 9PM FREE **KATHRYN KOCH**

THU JAN 21 9PM **THE PUBLIC PRESENTS: AMERICAN LOW, KEVIN SCOMA, HUMBLE BRAGGERS**

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Ranking Has Niagara Falls Among State's Worst Places to Live

Tony Farina

It was nearly four years ago that people flocked to Niagara Falls and watched from around the world as aerial daredevil Nik Wallenda made his historic wire walk over the roaring waters of the Niagara River and put the cataract city on the world stage for a brief moment. The date was June 15, 2012, and frankly it was the last time Niagara Falls, a world wonder city, basked in the limelight of such an epic event.

Much of the news since Wallenda's incredible feat has been about unfulfilled development promises, frozen water pipes, and a divisive mayoral election that saw the incumbent—who at first didn't want Wallenda to perform in the falls—returned to office in a controversial election process.

In general, the news has not been worthy of world attention despite the continuing success of the tourist business that was certainly given a big boost by the exposure generated by Wallenda's daring walk. And unfortunately, city and state leaders have not found a place to showcase Wallenda and recapture the excitement of his wire crossing that is now fading into distant memory. Thank god they haven't destroyed the world wonder of the falls themselves just yet.

But the Wallenda moment was a great time, and Niagara Falls Police certainly deserve credit for keeping the city safe leading up to the Wallenda event and making tourists and viewers feel Niagara Falls might be a great place to visit. And many of them have come, probably thanks to that night. And it should be noted that Police Supt. Bryan Dal-Porto is doing his best to deal with the crime problem in a poor city that gets flooded with tourist and gaming traffic most of the year.

But unfortunately, Niagara Falls is still best at being the focus of bad news, and that's the case in the latest survey of the 10 worst places to live in New York State by the people at www.roadsnacks.net which claims to have



used science and data to determine which cities in New York State are, in their words, "the real pits."

According to their findings, Niagara Falls is the third worst city in the state in which to live, right behind Richland and Albion.

RoadSnacks concedes it is impossible to attempt to summarize the entire state in a couple of paragraphs and says that no matter where people live they are fiercely protective, "and, like most other people in the northeast, they'd most likely you stay out, even when you're on vacation," an observation that certainly fits tourist-driven Niagara Falls which needs visitors to come all year.

RoadSnacks analyzed 500 of the state's most populous cities (over 5,000 people) and came up with its 10 worst places to live in the Empire State. Among the factors considered in their rankings was population density (the lower the worse-meaning there's less to do for indoor entertainment); unemployment; adjusted median income; housing vacancy rates; education and crime.

So what factors led to Niagara Falls' ranking as the third worst place to live in the

state? Here's what RoadSnacks has to say in justifying its rating:

"Niagara Falls (pop 50, 214) is the third most dangerous place in the state of New York. We're not talking about falling over cliffs. And yes, pick pocketers preying on unsuspecting tourists is probably a high number of those crimes. But the fact remains, that when you're within Niagara Falls city limits, you have a 1 in 17 chance of being robbed or having something you own vandalized.

"Does that sound like a fun place to live? Did you know Niagara Falls also has the 4th highest unemployment rate in the state at 8.1%? Or that homes are only valued at \$57,000?

"Say what you want about cheap living. The fact is, homes are priced by demand, and there's little demand to live in Niagara Falls."

So there you have it, one of the latest in the many negative ratings of the cataract city that dot the internet and probably discourage entrepreneurs and developers from coming to Niagara Falls to try and make something happen. Case in point: the continuing struggle of Buffalo developer Mark Hamister, pretty

much handed the keys to the public trough, unable so far to put together the financing to build a hotel downtown.

Oh where are you, Nik Wallenda? Will you ever return to help Niagara Falls be an exciting place again that can attract tourists and businesses? The answer is probably not, because that's the history of a city that pretty much has hit rock bottom with no serious reversal in sight despite the lofty talk from a leader who can't deliver on words.



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St Francis of Assisi

New Surgeries At Niagara Falls Memorial Provide Relief To Patients Suffering Severe Gastric Issues

NFMMC rapidly becoming Western New York center of excellence for surgical gastric procedures

Kevin Howey of Niagara Falls is a snack food merchandiser who for the past five years couldn't eat the goods he delivered – or much else, for that matter – because he suffered from a debilitating disease called gastroparesis.

"At times I couldn't eat anything for days," said the 28-year-old Howey. "I suffered frequent nausea and pain and I was constantly in the emergency room."

That all changed last month when Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center Surgeon Dr. Bala Thatigotla implanted a gastric electrical stimulator, also called a gastric pacemaker, in Howey's abdomen.

"I'm feeling 100 percent better," Howey says now. "This is best I've been in a long time."

Until now, patients had to travel to the Cleveland Clinic to receive this life-changing procedure. Manufactured by Medtronic, the gastric pacemaker transmits mild electrical

pulses that encourage the stomach to contract, which helps relieve nausea and vomiting.

In Kevin's case, the implant was done laparoscopically. Two days later he was home.

Literally translated, gastroparesis means stomach paralysis. During digestion, a healthy stomach contracts about three times a minute to empty itself of food and liquid. With gastroparesis, those contractions are less frequent and the stomach fails to empty as it should.

According to the National Institutes of Health, about five million Americans are afflicted by this condition. Those patients often find chronic nausea, vomiting, abdominal bloating and pain take control of their lives.

Once diagnosed, they are first treated with medication and a controlled diet, usually by a gastroenterologist.

"But for Kevin and many patients like him, those treatments are not effective," said Dr. Bala. "When we explored the possibility of implanting a gastric pacemaker for such patients, we discovered the nearest medical center doing the procedure was the Cleve-

land Clinic and they had a backlog of patients waiting to have it done."

That's when Memorial and Dr. Bala, along with fellow Memorial Surgeon Dr. Vikram Vattipally decided to add the minimally invasive procedure to their surgical offerings.

Memorial President & CEO Joseph A. Ruffolo said the decision was an easy one to make given the long distance patients had to travel to have it done and the quality of the surgeons available to perform it in Niagara Falls.

"Dr. Bala completed his fellowship in Advanced Laparoscopic Surgery/Bariatric Surgery at the highly regarded Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville while Dr. Vattipally completed his fellowship in the same specialty at Penn State University's Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Both of them have demonstrated uncommon skill in advanced surgical procedures since joining our staff," Ruffolo said.

Ruffolo noted that Memorial surgeons also are implementing a second new proce-

dures, one that will provide relief to patients suffering chronic acid reflux or GERD, an acronym for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease. It's called the LINX procedure.

The LINX System is a small flexible band of interlinked titanium beads with magnetic cores that is placed laparoscopically around the esophagus just above the stomach. The magnetic attraction between the beads helps the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) resist opening to gastric pressures.

"LINX allows food and liquid to pass normally into the stomach. The magnetic bond closes the LES immediately after swallowing, which prevents reflux from the stomach from entering the esophagus," Dr. Bala said.

The next nearest LINX System providers are in Pittsburgh and Cleveland, he noted.

"This is another opportunity for us to meet a significant regional need," Dr. Bala said.

For more information about these procedures, call (716) 278-4400.

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EVENTS

Korby Lenker: Medium Hero & Other Stories
Singer/songwriter debut fiction reads & plays
Thu, 1/14, 7 pm, Main Street store

Larkin Square Series: evening of romance with
local writers Jessica Topper and Amanda Dusen
Thu, 1/21, 5:30, Filling Station at Larkin Square

Alyssa Polombor: Violinist of Venice, debut novel
Local author—let's celebrate! w/reading & talk
Thu, 1/28, 7 pm, Main Street store

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TALKING LEAVES BOOKS

Dr. Gil Farkash Joins Medical Staff At Falls Memorial

Gil M. Farkash, M.D., F.A.C.O.G., has joined the medical staff at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center as a laborist in the Women's Services Department.

A graduate of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Buffalo, Dr. Farkash serves as chief of obstetrics and gynecology at Kaleida Health and is site director at Women & Children's Hospital of Buffalo. He holds board certification from the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Laborists are OB/GYN hospitalists whose presence improves patient safety and outcomes by ensuring a doctor experienced in delivering babies is physically present to work with a hospital's maternity team. Niagara Falls Memorial partnered with Women & Children's Hospital in 2015 to add this special kind of physician expertise to its labor and delivery services.



Art and Music Classes for Infants, Kids and Teens!

COMMUNITY ARTS ACADEMY at BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE

Spring 2016 · January 30–April 16, 2016

- MUSIC**
- Early Childhood Music and Movement. Saturdays, 9:30–10:15 a.m. (18–36 months); 10:30–11:15 a.m. (Birth–18 months); 11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m. (3–4-year-olds)
 - Buffalo Urban Music Project (Grades 4–8). Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. –noon
 - Jazz Workshop (Grades 6–12). Sundays, 1:00–2:30 p.m.

- VISUAL ARTS**
- Art Around the World (Grades K–3). Saturdays, 9:00–10:30 a.m.
 - Making Modern Art (Grades 4–8). Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. –noon
 - Intro to Drawing: Charcoal and Portraiture (Grades 8–12). Saturdays (February 6–April 23, 2016), 9:00–10:30 a.m.
 - Digital Media Design (Grades 9–12). Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. –noon

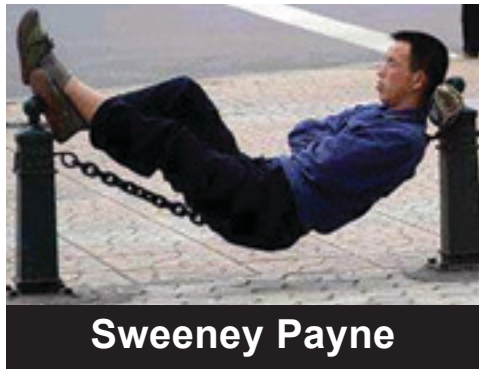
DEMO DAYS

Preview spring classes on January 23 and 30. (Advance registration required for Demo Day—call 878-6326 to reserve your spot.)

The Community Arts Academy (CAA) is a division of the Buffalo State School of Arts and Humanities. Instruction is provided by Buffalo State faculty members and student interns.

{ <http://artsandhumanities.buffalostate.edu/community-arts-academy> }

Only In North Tonawanda – NT Environmental Committee Doesn't Tell Us These Things!



Sweeney Payne

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recently reclassified the Niagara Sanitation site as a Class 2 site, a “significant threat to the public health or environment—action required.” Although in the Town of Wheatfield, it’s at the NT border, silently affecting NT residents with its contaminants.

In early 2015, NT was recognized by the Department of State as a Brownfield Opportunity Area! The focus of recent administrations on downtown and Oliver Street has been on putting that brownfield designation to use with grant funding.

There is a website at www.homefacts.com/environmentalhazards/New-York/Niagara-County/North-Tonawanda.html which contains interesting cautionary information for people considering purchases of real es-

tate in North Tonawanda. It doesn't have accurate site names but residents will recognize the addresses given.

Polluters in NT are described as having been found using the Toxic Release Inventory Program. Per the site, “The goal of the Toxics Release Inventory Program is to provide communities with information about toxic chemical releases and waste management activities and to support informed decision making at all levels by industry, government, non-governmental organizations, and the public.”

Listed as polluters: Taylor Devices/90 Taylor Drive; Swagelok Biopharm Services Co./76 Industrial; Buffalo Pumps/874 Oliver (three listings!); Battenfeld Grease and Oil Corp./1174 Erie; An-Cor Industrial Plastics/100 Mel-ody Lane (now using 900 Niagara Falls Blvd. for address); and Aglade Industries, LLC/765 River Road.

A brownfield site is “any land that has been contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by the Environmental Protection Agency as a candidate for cleanup because it poses a risk to human health and/or the environment. Real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”

Brownfield sites listed in NT are: Competition Transmission/68 Main; Gateway

Point 1/50 Dock Street; Gateway Point 2/18 Dock; Gateway Point 3/16 Dock; Gateway Point 4/82 River Road; Gateway Point 5/1 Sweeney; Gateway Point 6/78 River Road; Metzger Concrete Removal/235 River Road; Remington Rand Building/184 Sweeney; R. E. Krug Corp./190 Oliver; Triangle Area/400 Robinson; 110 Sweeney; 100 Sweeney; 34-38 Webster; 64-66 Webster; 78 Bridge; 986 Oliver; Arida 33/4 Bridge Street; Arida 4/2 Bridge; Arida Site 1/133 Michigan Avenue; Arida Site 2/231 Michigan; and NT's Incinerator/748 Walck.

Superfunds are “any land contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by the EPA as a candidate for clean-up because it poses a risk to human health and/or the environment.” On that list are: International Paper Tonawanda Mill/50 Bridge Street; Schreck's Scrapyard/55 Schenck; Booth Oil site/76 Robinson; Holiday Park/Walck-Zimmerman-East Robinson; Gratwick Riverside Park; Roblin Steel-Buffalo Bolt site/101 East Avenue; City property/Walck & Old Falls Blvd.; Hooker Chemical & Plastics site/600-680 Walck; Buffalo Pumps/874 Oliver; National Grinding Wheel site/Walck Road; Koppers Co. site/940 River Road; Niagara Sanitation/Nash Road (Wheatfield/NT border); Wurlitzer Co. site/908 Niagara Falls Blvd.; and the Botanical Gardens/Old Falls Blvd.

Under “Tanks & Spills found in North Tonawanda” it has: Wardell Boat Yard/1 Sweeney; Flanigan Chevrolet/27 Main; CSX/147 Tremont; Placid Harbour Marina/17 Detroit; Hurtubise Tire/63 Oliver; City Water Dept./1 Archer Street; DeGraff Memorial Hospital/445 Tremont; Sukwinder Sign/139 Main; Metzger Removal/235 River Road; Spruce Elementary School/195 Spruce; Grant Elementary School/Grant Street; Smith

Boys/278 River Road; R. E. Krug Corp./89 Thompson and NT Yard/Oliver and Thompson; Tondisco, Inc./80 Thompson; City Hall; NT Water Treatment Plant; 51 Robinson Street; Val-Kro Industrial Plating/369 River Road; and Lawless Container Corp./93 Robinson.

Environmental remediation generally just means they have capped over most of the mess because it is impossible to ever remove it all. There are others not on these lists, like the convenience store on Nash Road with buried but not removed gas tanks.

A “bar & eatery” is to open in the 64-66 Webster building using the address 62 Webster. NT's Lumber City Development Corp. obtained serious grants and tax credits for the former Mayor who created LCDC during his tenure who is either renting space to Alderwoman Catherine Schwandt, or per recent “rumors,” may be holding a mortgage on the building for her. Has anyone seen signs of environmental remediation there? Eager to eat there? Or in the former Remington Rand building restaurant? Or to move into the apartments there?

What about that water provided by NT? Are we all being poisoned? If those spills were bad, how can we still have children in Spruce and Grant Schools? Was there any connection to its tanks and spills with a recent fire at Placid Harbor Marina? Would you live on Tonawanda Island or along the waterfront on River Road?

Remember Love Canal was “remediated” and the same problems are occurring again there. Waste from Love Canal is buried at the Nash Road site at the NT border and is a serious concern.

FREE CONCERT

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THEIR PRICE Abilify™ \$2,964.49 <small>Special US Brand Price for 10mg x 90</small>	OUR PRICE Aripiprazole™ \$76.50 <small>Generic Price for 10mg x 90</small>	THEIR PRICE Lipitor™ \$966.03 <small>Special US Brand Price for 20mg x 100</small>	OUR PRICE Atorvastatin™ \$67.00 <small>Generic Price for 20mg x 100</small>
THEIR PRICE Flomax™ \$606.6 <small>Special US Brand Price for 1mg x 90</small>	OUR PRICE Tamsulosin™ \$52.20 <small>Generic Price for 1mg x 90</small>	THEIR PRICE Prevacid™ \$1,131.14 <small>Special US Brand Price for 30mg x 60</small>	OUR PRICE Lansoprazole™ \$105.00 <small>Generic Price for 30mg x 60</small>

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Equal Justice Under Law

These four words are written above the main entrance to the US Supreme Court in Washington DC. The sad reality is that they often mean little to the “arbiters” who are placed to hear oral arguments and not create oral arguments related to cases before the justices. The most current and contentious case before the aged panel of 9 “justices” is a direct assault on the collective bargaining rights that have enabled generations of workers to organize for better wages, benefits, and working conditions. On Monday, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the Friedrichs case, which will affect not only workers in the public sector, but the entire labor movement. Unions are required by law to bargain on behalf of every worker in a unionized shop, even if those workers opt not to join the union. As such, non-members receive the same higher wages (one study found that workers in unionized shops enjoy a wage premium of nearly 12 percent) and benefits enjoyed by their coworkers who belong to the union. Absent something else, this arrangement would create a free-rider problem, because individual workers have little incentive to join the union if they know they will get all the benefits of unionizing regardless of whether they reimburse the union for its costs. Eventually, unions risk becoming starved for funds and collapsing, causing the workers once represented by a union to lose the benefits of collective bargaining.

The anti-union, anti-worker billionaires backing this suit are trying to destroy unions and make it impossible for working people to come together, speak up for each other, and bargain collectively. An anti-union decision in the Friedrichs case would do far more than upend 40 years of legal precedent; it would put prosperity and the American dream further out of reach for millions of hard working men and women. As the proud representative of tens of thousands of dedicated, hard-working public employees, LIUNA stands in solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the public sector as they face the Friedrich case’s assault on their fundamental rights.

The very fact that an adverse decision in a single Supreme Court case could have such a devastating impact on millions of working men and women highlights the importance of the 2016 Presidential election. Supreme Court appointees are a President’s longest lasting legacy, making critical decisions in cases that affect millions of people for decades after a President has left office. With several spots on the Supreme Court expected to open up in the next few years, working men and women need someone in the White House who will appoint Justices ready to defend the right to organize.

Cuomo’s State Of State \$100 Billion In New Projects Furthers NYS Tax And Spend Concept!

Forgotten in the glamour of government officials talking about how they will deliver projects is who pays for it — You do!

During Governor Andrew Cuomo’s State of the State message on Wednesday, he proposed spending \$100 billion in new infrastructure projects – calling it an ambitious plan that would rival former Gov. Nelson Rockefeller’s building spree 50 years ago that helped create the sky high tax and spend state New York has become.

Of course Cuomo failed to say taxpayers will pay for it and seemed to fail to say how taxpayers will pay for it.

Especially with so many taxpayers leaving the state.

New York has the highest taxes, highest energy costs, least business-friendly climate and most citizens leaving the state out of the 50 competitors known as the United States.

“Until the Governor gets serious about reforming New York, we will continue the



If he said it, it must be so – Gov. Andrew Cuomo makes his State of the State – and the state of the state is high taxes and lots of people leaving. But that wasn’t mentioned.

exodus of jobs and people,” said Republican Chairman Ed Cox, making an expected carping criticism.

While, of course, his is a completely partisan statement, the fact is, he’s right!

National Fuel Reminds Residents To Stay Safe This Winter

Snow, ice and extreme cold temperatures can pose a variety of safety and performance issues for heating systems.

Ensure outdoor gas meter safety and proper service by:

- Keeping the gas meter and area around the meter free of snow
- Clearing paths to the meter
- Informing those working, shoveling, plowing or snowblowing around a meter of its
 - Calling National Fuel (1-800-365-3234) if a meter becomes encased in ice
 - Exercising caution when removing icicles from a meter or any area of the roof above the
- Not letting children play or climb on the meter

Natural gas furnaces and fireplaces have a vent pipe or flue that sends exhaust and gaseous byproducts outdoors through a chimney or pipe. Furnace exhaust vents can become easily clogged by debris, ice or snow, causing the furnace to shut off or operate inefficiently. Blocked vents also can lead to a buildup of carbon monoxide gas in-side a residence.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and dangerous gas produced when fuel (heating oil, propane, kerosene, charcoal, gasoline, wood or natural gas) is burned without enough air for complete combustion. When inhaled, carbon monoxide can cause unconsciousness, brain damage and death. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include: fatigue, coughing, headache, irregular breathing, dizziness, overall paleness, nausea and cherry red lips and/or ears. Those experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning should immediately open windows and doors, move outside and call 911.

Avoid a carbon monoxide emergency by:

- Having a qualified professional inspect and test chimney, appliances and heating
- Install at least one carbon monoxide detector in your home
 - Never use a gas oven or stovetop for heating your home
 - Never run a gasoline engine (such as a gasoline generator) or an automobile in
 - Never use a portable charcoal or propane grill indoors



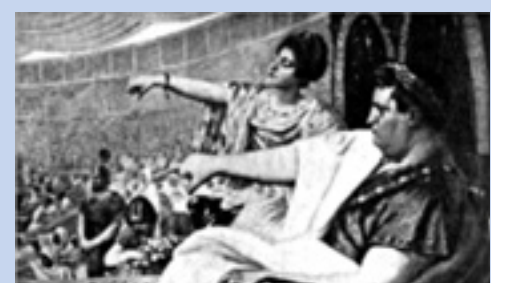
As always, if you smell gas, act fast! If a rotten-egg natural gas odor is present, leave the premises immediately without turning on or off any electrical appliances and call National Fuel’s emergency line (1-800-444-3130) from a different location.

If you smell an odor of gas outdoors, please call National Fuel’s emergency number and provide the address nearest to the site of the odor.

To learn more about natural gas safety, visit

<http://www.nationalfuelgas.com/for-home/gassafety>.

National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation is the Utility segment of National Fuel Gas Company, a diversified energy company that is engaged in a number of natural gas-related activities. The Utility provides natural gas service to approximately 738,000 customers in Western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania. To learn more about the Company, visit www.NationalFuelGas.com.



Is government supposed to entertain the governed?

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

Chuck Shephard

HARD TIMES FOR SCIENCE

■ (1) A tractor-trailer driver with a load of bottled water tried to make it over a historic bridge in Paoli, Indiana, on Christmas Day, with the obvious outcome when 35 tons of water starts across a limit-6-tons span. The driver told police she saw the 6-ton sign but did not know how that “translated” to pounds. (2) Among the activists denouncing a proposed solar-panel farm at a December Woodland (North Carolina) Town Council meeting were a husband and wife certain that vegetation near the panels would die because the panels would (the husband said) “suck up all the energy from the sun.” His wife (described as a “retired science teacher”) explained that the solar panels prevent “photosynthesis” (and also, of course, cause cancer). The council voted a moratorium on the panels.

RECENT RECURRING THEMES

■ Paul Stenstrom of Tarpon Springs, Florida, is among the most recent Americans to have discovered the brightest side of federal bankruptcy law, having lived in his mortgaged home basically free of charge from 2002 until 2013 by using the law to stave off foreclosure. Even though none of his 15 petitions was ever approved, he followed each one immediately with another petition, and it was not until 2013 that one judge finally declared Stenstrom a “seriously abusive filer,” barring further petitions for two years—at which point his bank was able to conclude the foreclosure. Upon expiration of the two-year period in September 2015, Stenstrom quickly filed another bankruptcy petition—to keep from being evicted from the townhouse on whose rent he is four months behind.

■ Bright Ideas: In October, once again, police (this time in Liyang in eastern China) arrested a man whom they accused of stealing women’s underwear, prolifically, with a device likened to a fishing rod, enabling him to reach into windows and extract goodies. The suspect, 32, admitted to a three-year scheme, and in his van police found 285 bras and 185 panties.

■ In December, Carlos Aguilera, 27, became the most recent brain-surgery patient to assist doctors by remaining conscious during the 12-hour operation—and playing his saxophone to help assure surgeons that their removal of a tumor was not affecting his speech, hearing or movement. The operation, at Spain’s Malaga Regional Hospital, was supposedly Europe’s first, but News of the Weird has reported two in the United States, including on a guitar-strumming man in 2013 at UCLA Medical Center.

■ Least Competent Criminals: (1) Nurse’s

aide Candace McCray, 36, is the most recent theft suspect to have worn some of the purloined jewelry when meeting police detectives investigating the theft. An assisted-living resident in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, had described her missing gems, and McCray was questioned as someone with access to the woman’s room. (2) Joshua Jording, 26, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, became the most recent burglary suspect caught on surveillance video during the crime wearing a shirt with his name on it (which was later found in Jording’s home, along with a stash from the Dec. 2 burglary).

■ More Core Failings of Carjackers: (1) Albert Luna, 19, was arrested in Coachella, California, in December and charged with swiping the keys while a Federal Express driver was unloading a package. The driver reported that Luna later walked away when he could not figure out how to drive the truck. (Bonus: The arrest report noted that during the entire episode, Luna was naked.) (2) Kyle Blair, 25, was arrested in Surrey, British Columbia, in November when he approached a car at an intersection and attempted to pull the driver out. For one thing, the two men in the car were later described as “big, burly” guys, but more important, they were plainclothes police officers on a stakeout.

■ Syrian refugees (mostly, Muslims) may pose a humanitarian and political crisis for Germany, but the Virginia Care company of Recklinghausen, Germany, said they are good for its business: sales of fake hymens, for women to convince Muslim grooms to believe they were wedding-night virgins. The non-chaste Virginia Care buyer inserts a packet of two membranes (about \$54) that will burst by penetrative sex, releasing blood coloring. (The “blood” is available either in “original” dark brownish red, which parents are said to expect, or “advanced” brighter red, thought to be more satisfying to husbands.)

■ Mendel Epstein (Lakewood, New Jersey) is not the only rabbi suspected of being overaggressive as he helps desperate wives obtain religiously proper divorces, but he will be headed to prison for 10 years after a federal court found that he used beatings, stun guns and, once, an electric cattle prod to convince reluctant husbands they should sign the papers. Orthodox Jewish wives cannot remarry properly without obtaining a “get,” and Rabbi Epstein was apparently very “convincing.” (According to trial evidence, he used the services of four thugs.) “Over the years,” Epstein confessed in court, “I guess I got caught up in my tough-guy image.”

■ Another Way to Tell If You’re Really, Really Drunk: Her passengers had run away, leaving Elena Bartman-Wallman, 23, behind the wheel but oblivious on a December afternoon in Aleknagik, Alaska, and her car’s tires had started to smoke. She had lodged her foot against the accelerator, facing the wrong way on the road, with her wheels spinning continuously, and by the time police arrived (to discover Bartman-Wallman passed out), the front tires had melted down to the rims.

Second Amendment Watch: NY State’s Secret Reporting System

Elizabeth Pineault

NY State’s Secret Reporting System

Are you in it? You might be if you felt sad when your child died; or when you could not sleep; or when you learn that a loved one is diagnosed with a serious medical condition; or when a loved one betrays you; or you are taking certain psychotropic medicines; and you told a Physician (including Psychiatrists), Psychologist, Registered Nurse (including Nurse Practitioners), or Licensed Clinical Social Worker about it.

The secret NY State Reporting System is called ISARS. It was introduced under the NYS SAFE Act. It is the electronic reporting system that mental health professionals use to report you to various NYS agencies, including the NYS Police, and to the federal government via the FBI. They can do so if they think that you “are likely to engage in conduct that would result in serious harm to self or others.” They also can report you if they simply want to or do not like you. They can make up a story about you that is untrue. Nobody checks the story.

Governor Cuomo’s SAFE Act specifically provides that if a mental health professional uses “reasonable professional judgment” and “good faith” when making a determination, this decision cannot be the basis for any civil or criminal liability on the part of that professional. In other words, the mental health professional can report just about anything about you and there is not much you can do about it. As past and recent cases have shown, it appears that nobody verifies the accuracy of any facts in the report, if there are any. So, the damage that can be done to you by unethical

mental health professionals is serious.

If you did not get a notice, do not think that you have not been reported. It has been reported that over 75,000 New York residents have been reported through Governor Cuomo’s Secret Reporting System (ISARS). The only persons who were reported and who do get a notice about it are licensed gun owners.

How can you find out if you have been reported? You can contact the NYS Police and file a Free-dome of Information Law (FOIL)—Article 6 request for all records pertaining to you in their possession or under the control of the NYS Police, since January 1, 2013.

I wonder if this person should have been reported when he said:

“Many days I didn’t have the energy to try to unravel the tangled ball of emotions.” (p. 233).

“I was obsessive about seeing them.” (p. 233)

It was Governor Cuomo writing about how he felt after his divorce, in his October 2014 autobiography.

Was he a “danger to himself or others”?

Governor Cuomo calls it the New York State SAFE Act. My question is: “SAFE for whom?”



light 'em
if ya got 'em

PHOTO: ROSE MATTREY

candles at
terrapiin station

PHILLIP JAMES - THE CANDLE MAN

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Cuomo’s State Of The State Address Environmental Issues

NEW YORK, N.Y.— Governor Andrew Cuomo’s state of the state address, combined for the first time with his ex-ecutive budget proposal, discussed a range of pro-environmental initiatives. The Governor’s announcement included proposals to: raise the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$300

million; spend \$15 million on clean energy opportunity training programs to train workers for solar installation and technology; install solar panels on over 150,000 homes and businesses; and, eliminate the use of coal in New York State by 2020.

CITY HALL JOKES...



Who said "I want new blood!"
 a) Dracula
 b) Andrew Touma
 c) Gail J. McGovern, President of the American Red Cross,
 d) all of the above



A thought bubble above Kristen Grandinetti's head:
 "If blatant sexism occurred on the city council, and no one acknowledged it, did the blatant sexism really occur?"



Andrew Touma walks into a bar, stands on his tiptoes, looks the bartender in the eye and says in a studied sincere voice, "I'll have a Bloody Mary. And use new blood"



One of these things is not like the other, one of these things doesn't belong. Can you tell which one?

- a) Chairman Sam Fruscione
- b) Chairman Charles Walker
- c) Chairman Andrew Touma
- d) Chairman Glenn Choolokian
- e) Kristen Grandinetti



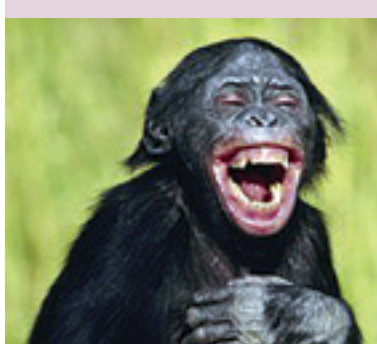
"Disloyal, Disruptive and Un-productive" isn't a new law firm, it's how Kristen Grandinetti characterized some of the highest paid city employees.



Rick Smith, who was recently and unceremoniously bounced from the Planning Board, has joined the fastest growing group in town. It's the "I was back stabbed by City Hall and never saw it coming" club. They're holding their first meeting in the grand ballroom of the conference center next week.



People are saying that the mayor's call for resumes and his veiled threat to fire department heads has turned city hall into an incredibly paranoid, angry and unsociable work place. What people don't realize is that the paranoia, anger and unsociable atmosphere is all part of the city hall charm.



Mayor Dyster truly does have people coming together like never before. First the Reporter and then the Gazette joined along to vigorously criticize the mayor for demanding resumes and let-ters of intent from all department heads as His Honor holds their jobs hostage.



Answer: Rats, cats and dilapidated flats.

Question: Name three things that are out of control in Niagara Falls.

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Your Weekly Horoscope

By Jean Topascani



Aries: (March 21 - April 19)

Somehow after a shower you just look even greasier.

Doctor examines your brain but found nothing there. You drive way too fast to worry about cholesterol. You hate people who use big words just to make themselves look perspicacious.



Cancer: (June 21 - July 22)

You're why the terrorists hate us. A thought crossed your mind? It was a long

and lonely jour-ney. Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else. When you were born, the doctor came out to the waiting room and said to your father, "I'm very sorry. We did everything we could. But he pulled through."



Libra: (September 23 - October 22)

Every time people see you they are reminded of how

unfair life is. There is no vaccine against stupidity. When there's a will, you want to be in it. You do realize makeup isn't going to fix your stupidity?



Capricorn: (December 22 - January 19)

People would punch you in the face but they

don't since touching your face would be disgusting. What's red and bad for your teeth? A brick. You are depriving some poor village of its idiot. When people look into your eyes, they see straight through to the back of your head.



Taurus: (April 20 - May 20)

Your adult acne is ruining this party. If ignorance is bliss, you must be the

happiest person alive. Two wrongs are only the beginning. Don't let your education get in the way of your ignorance.



Leo: (July 23 - August 22)

Did someone dig up the septic tank in my yard? Oh, you're here. That explains

it. Artificial Intelli-gence usually beats real stupidity. Stupidity is not a crime so you are free to go. You don't suffer from insanity. You enjoy every minute of it.



Scorpio: (October 23 - November 21)

If you were murdered People would want to listen to what the killer had to say.

Cleaning mirrors is a job you could really see yourself doing. Your mind is like a steel trap, rusty and illegal in 37 states.



Aquarius: (January 20 - February 18)

You are mistaken for a dead walrus. Getting paid

to sleep would be your dream job. Artificial intelligence is no match for your natural stupidity. If it ain't broke, you have-n't borrowed it yet. We have enough gun control. What we need is idiot control.



Gemini: (May 21 - June 20)

When God made you, he decided to abandon us. Keep

talking, someday you'll say something intel-li-gent. Plan to be spontaneous – tomorrow. People sometimes make fools of oth-ers, but you are the do-it-yourself type.



Virgo: (August 23 - September 22)

Hey pizza-face! You've got a big nose! Some day you

will find yourself - and wish you hadn't. You are a vegetarian not because you love animals. You are a vegetarian because you hate plants. You are probably single....because you didn't forward those chain messages in 2008.



Sagittarius: (November 22 - December 21)

You could be useful as a counter-argument for

Intelligent Design. Learning how to collect trash wasn't hard. You just pick it up as you go along. Some days you are the bug, some days you are the windshield.



Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

A conversation with you is like changing an adult diaper. It just keeps unfolding to reveal new

hor-rors. Your fear of moving stairs is escalating. Join the Army, meet interesting people, and kill them. Your IQ came back negative.

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