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# THE NIAGARA REPORTER

FREE

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## SPECIAL EDITION OF 'THE CRIME' Lewiston Police Perv Caught How...?

Lewiston PD Officer arrested for filming woman in locker room confessed on lie detector test while applying for State Trooper job!

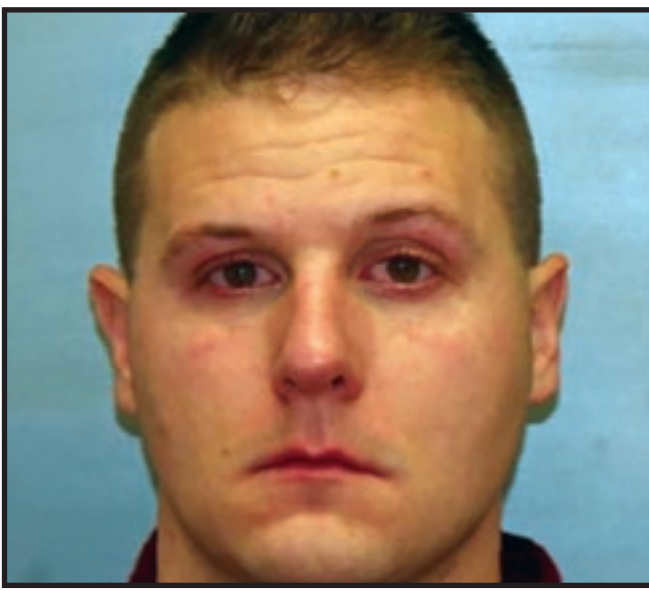
By: Frank Parlato

*Analysis*

It's hard to decide which is the bigger disqualification for Alexander P. Ruckh ever being a police officer again:

Stupidity or moral turpitude. Ruckh is the Lewiston police officer arrested last month by NY state police for secretly filming a woman undressing in a locker room with his I-Phone 6.

What makes him so stupid is not just the illicit, stupid act itself, but, as the Reporter has exclusively learned, Ruckh actually confessed to his crime while taking a lie de-



(Cont. on pg. 4)

## North Tonawanda is 'BOOMING'

By: Brendan McDonough

*Analysis*

From Webster Street to Oliver Street North Tonawanda is getting busier and City officials could not be happier. With the coming addition of Spot Coffee and other restaurants opening near the old history museum, it's something that they hope will bring more people in; helping to grow the City and the local economy.



(Cont. on pg. 6)

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OFFICIAL HOME OF **THE CRIME** PAGE 4

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# NIAGARA FALLS

## 'Comeback Kid' Gawel to Run for Council As Politics Heat Up Early in Falls

**Tony Farina**

Even at this early stage, and it is not as early as usual because of the changes in state election law, the air is ripe with politics in Niagara Falls, mingling with the lingering bad taste of the gaming war between the state and the Seneca Nation and the uncertainty of when--or even if--the slot payments will begin flowing again after an arbitration panel's ruling in favor of the state.

A new face has entered the political arena, although he's been there before, and while he is an official with the city Republican Committee, former Councilman Michael Gawel is an early public supporter of Democrat Robert Restaino for mayor even as he tosses his hat into the ring for council.

Gawel, a CPA who served as a councilman back in the 1990's, made his announcement for one of two council seats up for election this year at last Thursday's Republican Committee meeting at the Niagara Falls Ice Pavilion. He was warmly received by Committee Chairman Bill Carroll and the others on hand, including previously announced council hopeful Candace Corsaro.

"We need a council that can work with the mayor and make the budget numbers work for residents and businesses," said Gawel, stressing his background as a certified public accountant (CPA) and small business owner.

Gawel is a magna cum laude graduate of Niagara University with a degree in accounting and he also earned a law degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Gawel signaled his intentions to back Restaino for mayor this year in November when he attended the former judge's formal announcement of his candidacy at the Como Restaurant.

In a letter to this newspaper, Gawel stated "as a taxpayer who owns a number of properties in Niagara Falls, I am looking forward to the city taking a more business approach to government, and Robert Restaino, regardless of political affiliation, is the kind of leader we need to change the city's direction. I look forward to having the opportunity to work with him at City Hall and get Niagara Falls moving forward again. It is time for change."

Gawel went on to say he believes Restaino will bring together Democrats, Republicans, Conservatives, and others in the best interest of the city. Restaino has not sought Republican support at this time.

As things stand now, Restaino and Seth Piccirillo, a top aide to Mayor Paul Dyster, could square off in a Democratic primary for mayor in June now that the state has consolidated state and federal primary elections as part of a package of election reforms, including early voting. Dyster, also a Democrat, has not committed to seeking a fourth term, perhaps waiting to see what the Senecas do now that they have lost the

arbitration with the state.

Under Dyster, the city has used casino cash to balance the budget for the last several years, and even if the city receives the back payments this year, severe challenges remain to fix the structural deficits the city faces every year.

Gawel says his experience as a tax accountant and small business owner give him the background to help the city regain its financial footing, including finding new revenue sources. Gawel is CFO of Perfection Vapes, Inc., part owner of Dino's Tires and Service Center, and has served as an election inspector in Niagara Falls for more than 30 years.

Some friends are hailing Gawel's return to politics as a candidate for the title "the Comeback Kid," given some past personal problems that he has long overcome.

"I guess Bob Restaino and I have a lot in common," says Gawel. "He had problem with the telephone in the courtroom and I made some mistakes a long time ago. Both of us have overcome our problems with him now serving our city as president of the school board, and we are committed to helping Niagara Falls make a comeback, too. I'm looking forward to this race and plan to work hard to win the support of the people who share my determination to get Niagara Falls back on its feet."

Gawel was born in Niagara Falls, the son of Chester Gawel, 96, and Mary Gawel, 88, who will likely make



Niagara Falls City Council Candidate Michael Gawel

as many appearances as possible with their son in his comeback campaign for council.

As for the casino cash, still no word from the Seneca Nation on when or if they are going to write a check for about \$200 million to New York State, the estimated amount they owe after stopping the revenue sharing payments after 2016 because that's when the payments ended under the compact.

A gaming arbitration panel has ruled 2 to 1 against the Senecas, saying the payments to the state must continue even without language in the compact. The Senecas have been silent since the ruling, and sources say they are continuing to look at their options.

# NIAGARA



# REPORTER

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**Ken Hamilton**

As many Niagarans celebrate the birthday of civil rights martyr the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who died in Memphis TN while campaigning for the rights of a group of black municipal workers to receive equal employment conditions, there could be no better time for us to examine the state of Niagara Falls' Black community as it relates to our own municipal government, school district, county government and beyond to every elected official and appointed administrator that impacts such. To fail to take an objective look at such, would not only be to have African-Americans thinking that we are in one place while we are really in another; but with the "black community" being 23% of the city's population, it would be a grave disservice to all Niagarans not to do so.

This series will be largely historically based, describing not only where we are, but also how we got to being here.

And yes, names will be named; but only in their public service capacities and how they impacted the lives of the black community, the city and beyond – all the way up to the presidents.

Fasten your seat belts, for it ought

to be a fun but informative ride.

While we should start at the level of government that is most specific, albeit the job itself is less impactful on black district residents – the county legislature and its legislators (many white legislators have also had impacts on "the community" we will start with the highest profiled Niagara Falls politician now serving, Mayor Paul Dyster.

Let me say straight away, though he is one of the few local politicians of which I either have never voted for and/or have never helped to get into or remain in office. I personally feel that that, even so, he deserves a fair hearing in all that he does or doesn't do. Believe it or not, there are some things that he's done of which I am appreciative; but there are clearly some things of which I believe could have been either left undone or reversed.

But because it is King's birthday, a time to reflect not only upon his dream, but to also extend our minds beyond it, piercing through it like an arrow, to hit the targets beyond the targets. To do so, we must pull the bowstring back in order to propel the arrow forward.

#### KING DIED SO THAT CITY WORKERS COULD WORK

Somewhere in the boxes and filing cabinets are files and other information that I have where there just has to be additional historical data on employment statistics and stories of African-Americans working in city government. There are the stories of the first city black city department head Joseph Profit whom, as a result of him holding the position of head of the Department of Public works, he has a street named for him between Highland Avenue and

9th Street. Also there are the stories of Nadrué Braswell, deputy city clerk under Elsie Paradise, and Cynthia Baxter who actually had a stint as City Clerk – and you'll never quest what black city councilman who voted to get rid of her. There are city administrators Bill Bradberry and Donna Owens. There are also school board members, other city councilmen, county legislators, state senators, comptrollers and even a governor who was black. Yet, the black community is where the black community is: and the State of the Black Community isn't good – but there are some bright spots.

In examining the Dyster record, when it comes to the reason why King was in Memphis where he was shot, there, like thin gossamer clouds draped across the night sky, there do appear to be the twinkle of stars amidst them.

In examining the city's EEO4 reports from 2009 and 2017, it would seem that a group of city workers known as the Niagara Falls-Six have indeed made some impact as a result of their discrimination lawsuit.

Whereas, in 2009, the city had 397 Type 16 jobs (239 full-time and 158 parttime) – assessor's office, city clerk, code enforcement, community development, engineering, finance, HR, parks, public works, planning and environmental development, purchasing, and the public library (the library isn't a city department, however it receives the bulk of its funding from the city, HR manages but doesn't select its employees and the finance handles its finances). There were 27 black fulltime employees (17 men and 10 women) and among the 158 part-timers and

temporary employees there were 25 black men and 10 black women.

However, on the 2017 EEO4 Report, there were no part-time/temporary jobs and 239 full-time employees, with 23 black men – a 35% increase; and 9 black women, an 11% decrease, but an overall 19% increase in black full-time hiring.

Not all of the public safety sector fared as well. In the type-4 jobs, Public Safety – Police, though the number of jobs was up from 163 in 2009 to 175 in 2017, there were 10 sworn officers in 2017 were black: 7-men and 3-women, with 3 black women in administrative support. In 2009 there were only 4 black men and 2 black women sworn officers in 2006; there were 3 black women in administrative support and technical. A 7% 2017 increase in the force yielded a 44% increase in black hiring.

In 2006 there were 140 NFFD employees with 3 black male smoke-eaters and one black woman in administrative support. In 2017 the department was down to 2-black males and no black females at all.

While the State of Black Employment in the city is as it is, with the public safety jobs being civil service, it is largely incumbent upon the 23% of city residents who are members of the black community to change the numbers of 19% of city jobs by being prepared to apply for the jobs, and applying yourself with a good education, no criminal record and the ability to pass the drug test. The State of the Black Community and King's Dream are counting on you.

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# THE CRIME

## *Lewiston Police Perv Cont. from Cover*

tector test while applying for a job with state police!

That's right, according to sources, he actually confessed during the interview process.

The 31-year-old Ruckh started blabbing about what he had done while taking a mandatory lie detector test, a requirement to be hired as a NY state trooper, according to sources.

"He probably never would have been caught had he not gotten nervous during his lie detector test," one source said. "He answered one question evasively, was questioned further, then nervously answered another question, and another, sweating, hemming and hawing, alternately lying, and telling the truth, and caving right before the astonished interviewer's eyes. He confessed like you see criminals confess on TV. He folded like a cardboard suit."

I can almost hear Ruckh now: "Yes. I once did something wrong. No. It was just a small thing. Yes. I liked this woman. No. It was nothing really – Yes. I slipped my I-Phone into the locker room and I turned on the camera. No. I'm really sorry. Yes. I never shared the video. No. I only did it four times. And yes, only once from the window of her house. No. It was

more than a year ago. No. I never did it again. I mean yes.... I mean no... I mean I don't know what I mean."

By the time he was done, Ruckh was nearly in tears. State police played it with a poker face. Ruckh might have left thinking his forthright honesty might have secured him the job.

Rather than offer him a job, however, State Police used his confession to arrest him. He took his lie detector test in November. He was arrested on December 13, accused of three counts of unlawful surveillance in the second degree.

Police are not revealing the location where he allegedly did his I-Phone spying, but our source revealed that it was at the Upper Mount Fire Company in Lewiston. The alleged surveillance occurred in the spring and summer of 2017. Ruckh was not on police duty when he did the alleged locker room filming.

He was a volunteer fireman.

Ruckh, who was with the Lewiston PD for four years, has been suspended without pay as a policeman. He also resigned as a volunteer fireman.

There is no allegation that Ruckh attempted to rape or sexually confront or abuse the woman.

The Niagara County District At-

torney's Office is handling the prosecution.

Niagara County District Attorney Caroline Wojtaszek said of the case, "I can tell you it did span a number of months and it did happen on a number of occasions that the allegation is that the defendant surreptitiously video recorded a victim changing clothes in a locker room."

Lewiston Police Chief Frank Previte said what finally happens to Ruckh depends on how his case is resolved. The translation of that is that, if Ruckh can get a plea deal for a misdemeanor, he might be able to remain on the Lewiston police force. A felony will almost certainly force his termination.

As to whether Ruckh will do prison time, it should be noted that he is charged with three counts of unlawful surveillance in the second degree, to use or install an imaging device for sexual arousal.

It is a class E felony. Each offense is punishable by up to four years in prison.

If convicted, Ruckh may be required to register as a sex offender under New York's Sex Offender Registration Act.

Ruckh, however, is represented by one of the premier criminal defense

attorneys in NY State, Joseph Latona, a Niagara Falls native. As readers know, Latona recently took one of his cases to the US Supreme Court to exonerate an innocent client.

An order of protection has been issued in this case, which means Ruckh and his I-Phone have to stay away from the alleged victim. He is due back in court on Feb. 5.

"We will appear in court and enter a plea of not guilty," LaTona said.

Bail was set between \$500 and \$1,000, which Ruckh posted since his arrest.

In the end, should everyone, including the victim, decide to forgive him, let him off with a misdemeanor, and with a hearty mea culpa on his part, accompanied with tears, and let him go back to his old job, one has to ask - is this the kind of man we want as a police officer?

No, I don't mean the perv part. I mean a guy who confesses crimes on a job interview can't be smart enough to outwit criminals.

This is one dumb cop.

We will be following this case closely in case it falls below the radar and Ruckh tries to slip back to wearing a badge, a gun and an I-Phone again.

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# NORTH TONAWANDA

## NT Booming Cont.

“Right in the middle of our downtown section with the History Museum being moved to Oliver Street, what is going in there is going to be a tremendous thing for this community,” said Mayor Art Pappas. “Being right where it is, right in that location, I think the citizens of this community are going to be very, very happy and proud to see what is coming.”

It’s not just coffee either. North Tonawanda is also growing with diversity and cultural arts programs.

“The other thing I am happy to report on is the usage of the Carnage Arts Center,” said Mayor Pappas. “That building is now being used more and more for exactly what we had planned for and that is the introduction of more of the arts and more programs; like that in the Twin Cities.”

Thanks in large part to city leaders and Common Council President Eric Zadzilka, these

additions, as well as the changes being made effecting the everyday lives of residents, are turning North Tonawanda from just a nice place to visit to ‘destination hub.’

“It is a busy, busy time,” said Zadzilka, “and we are really focused on projects throughout the City. NT has become a destination over the years. We are experiencing it and even have a housing boom happening. These are the things that really need to be focused on. It is so important that we dedicate our time and effort to making sure all of these prospective projects, and even ones that are coming down the road that the public isn’t aware of yet, are successful.”

From the sprucing up of the Botanical Gardens to business booming, 2019 is going to be a busy year for North Tonawanda.

“I am very pleased about Armstrong Pumps and their \$18 million expansion that shows their commitment to this community,” said Zadzilka.



The North Tonawanda Common Council at a recent meeting.

“It had been a slow roll for them to get a commitment into doing this and now we are actually getting that done. I also want to acknowledge the botanical gardens as a group that has worked hard. It is volunteer based and they are continually working alongside city leaders to maintain and restore our botanical gardens. It is a huge thing for us to be working with the waterkeepers and to be getting grants. We have got a lot of good things coming so be on the lookout

because this year is going to be even bigger and better than the last.”

2018 also showed the influence that volunteers can have in the community.

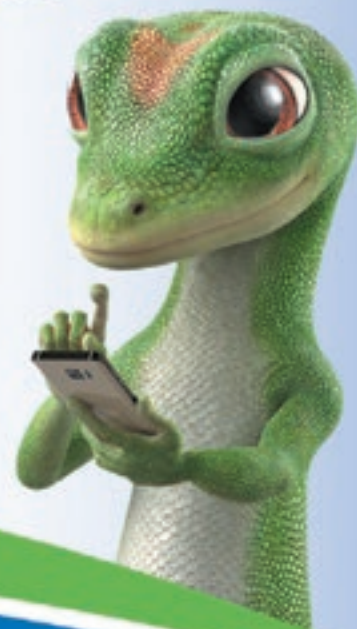
“Tied together with the Rivera Theater and the Hershel Carousel Museum, and even the volunteers at Project Pride, all of these things help the cultural arts in our community, so I am very happy to report on that,” said Mayor Pappas.

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# Health Rally in NT



## Brendan McDonough

Inside the Wurlitzer Building organizers held their first health rally this past weekend.

In collaboration with young living essential oils they showcased new products and ways for people across North Tonawanda to get healthy and stay healthy.

From oils to beauty products there was something for everyone. Organizers say it's important not just to be physically fit but to also be mentally

fit, as well.

"I am a registered nurse and I feel like we need to be more pro-active about our health, instead of just being re-active. So, with young living we are able to provide whole life natural health and wellness options," said Erin O'Connor, Event Organizer.

Saturday was just the first of many health rally's that they hope to have at the Wurlitzer Building. O'Connor says they are hoping to have another one in the spring.



## Physical Wellness: How Much Should You Exercise?

Exercise is an integral part of being physically well. The benefits of exercise extend inward to our overall health and well-being. As your physical wellness improves, you will become more familiar with your body's vital signs and warning symptoms, how your body reacts and performs based on what you do (and what you don't do) and what your body craves. Exercise has been proven to lower stress levels, improve cardiovascular health, improve bone density and lower cancer risk. People who consistently exercise experience less chronic pain, better sleep, improved brain function and a stronger immune system. So now that we have established exercise is good for us, how much should we do? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides the following weekly recommendation for adults (both young and old alike):

- 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity OR
- 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity OR
- A combination of moderate-intensity and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity AND
- At least two sessions of moderate to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity includes: Light jogging, leisurely bike riding and walking are all examples of moderate-intensity aerobic activities. These activities get your blood pumping but you are still able to hold a light conversation. Choose to do these activities when you are either just starting to exercise or coming back from a break in activity.

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity includes: playing basketball, football and soccer, running, hiking, swimming and interval training all require more from your body than moderate-intensity aerobic activities and result in an increased heart rate and breath rate.

Muscle-strengthening activities include: weight lifting (chest press, shoulder press, bicep curl, leg press) and bodyweight exercises (crunches, lunges, wall sits, planks). After you become familiar with muscle-strengthening activities, try adding different types of equipment into your routine for an added challenge, such as resistance bands and tubes, BOSU balls, stability balls and medicine balls.

You can break up aerobic activity into 10 minute increments throughout the day or start with 10 minutes at a time - start with alternating walking for one minute and jogging for one minute until you reach a total of 10 minutes. Next time, aim for 12 minutes. Bottom line: You don't need to be a marathon runner or weightlifting champion to be physically well; engaging in consistent aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities over time will contribute to an improved sense of physical wellness.

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# MATRIMONIAL LAW PERSONAL INJURY FAMILY LAW BANKRUPTCY



CHAPTER 7 & CHAPTER 13

**CRIMINAL  
DEFENSE**  
WILLS, TRUSTS,  
& ESTATES

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### SILVER PACKAGE (\$90 MONTHLY)

2 JOBS PER MONTH FOR TOTAL  
OF 2 HOURS

- CLEANING GUTTERS
- FIXING WINDOWS OR SCREENS
- FIXING MINOR PLUMBING LEAK
- REPLACING KITCHEN FAUCET
- REPLACING LIGHT BULBS
- UNPLUG SINKS
- CHANGE OR REPLACE FURNACE FILTER
- HANGING CURTAINS/BLINDS/PICTURES
- RAKE YARD
- CHANGE LOCKS (2 PER CALL)
- REPLACE TOILET SEAT

### GOLD PACKAGE (\$115 MONTHLY)

2 JOBS PER MONTH FOR TOTAL  
OF 2 HOURS

- INCLUDES ALL FROM SILVER PACKAGE
- INSTALL WINDOW (2 PER CALL)
- UNPLUG TOILET
- FIX SWITCHES OR OUTLETS
- REPLACE SINK • CLEAN FURNACE
- REPLACE SMOKE DETECTOR OR CO (4)
- RE-ROUTE CABLE FOR TV
- FIX HOLE IN WALL (UP TO 12")
- REPLACE MIRROR
- MOVE FURNITURE IN HOUSE
- ASSEMBLE STORE • FIX SIDING BOUGHT PRODUCTS
- INSTALL DRYWALL (3 SHEETS UNFINISHED)
- FIX MINOR FENCE PROBLEMS
- REPLACE INTERIOR DOOR

### PLATINUM PACKAGE (\$135 MONTHLY)

3 JOBS PER MONTH FOR TOTAL  
OF 3 HOURS

- INCLUDES ALL FROM SILVER & GOLD PACKAGES
- INSTALL CEILING FAN (WIRING MUST BE PRESENT)
- REPLACE HOT WATER TANK
- REPLACE EXTERIOR DOOR
- FIX GARAGE DOOR
- JUMP START VEHICLE
- PAINT ROOM (12' BY 15')
- CLEAN SEWER
- REPLACE SHOWER FIXTURES
- CLEAN WINDOWS (4, DOUBLE HUNG)
- REPLACE LIGHT FIXTURE (2 PER CALL)
- FIX ROOF LEAKS (1 SQUARE)
- INTERIOR PAINTING (1 HOUR)
- VEHICLE TOW WITHIN 15 MILES
- REPLACE TOILET
- FIX TILE (ONE SQUARE)

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