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TRYING TO DUMB IT DOWN

Kennedy wants to make it easier to become a cop in the Falls; City Council rebukes idea.



(Cont. on pg. 3)

Spanbauer Shooting Straight With Voters in Run for Council

By: Tony Farina

John Spanbauer is shooting straight from the hip in his campaign for a seat on the Niagara Falls City Council.

A Republican, Spanbauer is telling voters as he works the city that there are no easy choices in the next four years, warning that it will take some politically difficult decisions to right the financial ship.

(Cont. on pg. 2)

More or Less Public Speaking at City Council Meetings

By: Ken Hamilton

Sometimes we are just too close to the forest to see the trees. That is to say that after we have looked at a set of problems for so long that the only problem becomes that we begin to no longer see the problem as a problem.

(Cont. on pg. 6)

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NIAGARA FALLS

Spanbaur Cont. from Cover

Spanbauer, a retired college administrator and part-time professor is talking about issues that are normally off-limits to political candidates, like the need to review "obsolete union contracts and contract provisions that are costly to the city."

The political newcomer says there is a need to operate government in a fiscally responsible manner to insure a financial recovery in the coming years, and in that regard he says "I have many questions as related to the city budget, specifically the payroll," saying he is trying to understand why there are so many employees making very hefty salaries.

Spanbauer says according to the 2018 payroll stats published by the public service website See-ThroughNY, Niagara Falls has 16 employees making over \$150,000 with two making over \$200,000.

Spanbauer adds when compared to similar-sized municipalities such as Binghamton, Utica and Troy, "those cities do not have one employee making \$150,000. A portion of our taxes go to pay city employees, but I am concerned that the city payroll is burdened with an unjustified amount of salaries that

are over \$100,000. In 2018, the city had 80 employees making over \$100,000. With a city that is financially strapped, I struggle with the fact that the city has approximately 500 full-time employees with 16% making over \$100,000.

The former college administrator concedes that the contracts are in place for several years to come, the work of previous city lawmakers and mayors, but that the time to start running government like a business has come, given the city's dire fiscal condition made all the worse by the gaming stalemate with the Senecas.

If elected to the council, Spanbauer said he will consider himself an "elected employee" with the taxpayers of Niagara Falls as his supervisor.

Spanbauer says that from day one of his campaign, he has quoted Arthur Schoellkopf who was elected mayor of Niagara Falls in 1896 with a slogan of "Municipal government is business not politics," and that's the way he would govern if elected.

"I will use the skill set I obtained in the private sector to operate government like a business," he tells voters. "In the private sector, it is understood that when expenses

exceed revenues, changes have to be made. I have been part of tough budgetary decisions, and will guarantee our residents that I will do my best to ensure that the leadership of this city operates in a fiscally responsible manner."

Spanbauer, who says the city must gradually scale back on its reliance on casino dollars to balance budgets, says the city and council must convene a city budget summit involving all of the stakeholders, including residents, in determining the level of basic services that are appropriate for the city and how to pay for those services.

Given the city's extremely precarious financial condition, Spanbauer says that every time there is a retirement or someone leaves a city position, the position must be evaluated and assessed. In other words, is it needed or can it be consolidated with another position?

It is tough talk for a politician to even suggest examining union contracts, but Spanbauer is shooting straight from the hip in pointing out the city's deepening fiscal crisis and the need to look at running government like a business, cutting costs when the money is running out.

For Niagara Falls, the money is

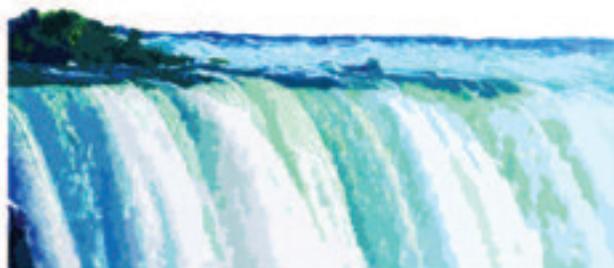


Niagara Falls City Council Candidate John Spanbauer.

running out, and the situation grows more difficult by the day given the ongoing gaming crisis and escalating costs. The next administration, including mayor and council, will have its work cut out to make ends meet, including finding new revenue streams, and that will mean making tough political decisions that have been avoided for years.

Spanbauer deserves credit for telling voters how it is and letting them know there are difficult times ahead with no easy choices.

NIAGARA



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Frank Parlato, Jr.
Publisher & Editor in Chief

Nicholas D. D'Angelo
Managing Editor

P.O. Box 3083, Niagara Falls NY 14304
(716) 870-1175 niagarareporter@gmail.com



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Wilson: Lakeside Market

Youngstown: Anchor Spirits & Wines, Bandanas Bar & Grill, Public Library, Rite Aid, Village Diner

Dumbing it Down Cont from Cover.

Kennedy Resolution dead on arrival.

Tony Farina

A resolution sponsored by Councilman William Kennedy to make it easier for police officers in other municipalities to transfer to the ranks of the Niagara Falls Police Department was pulled by Kennedy for lack of support.

It was basically a non-starter, according to council sources, and Kennedy pulled it to do more study on the issue.

"It was a resolution to tweak the process but there was no support," says Councilman Chris Voccio.

The Kennedy resolution would amend civil service laws to allow the lateral transfers to fill vacancies, but Kennedy was the lone supporter.

Police Supt. Tom Licata cited "complex issues" that require more discussion, and the council is expected review the matter in the coming weeks prior to receiving the mayor's budget at the end of the month which, according to sources, may include police staffing recommendations.

Councilman Ezra Scott, although

not supporting the resolution, stated he would like more information and investigation into the idea.

"I believe we also need to discuss the 60 credit hours requirement," Scott said. "Why do we have that requirement?"

In a study conducted by the National Police Foundation in 2017, which studied 958 agencies, about one third (30.2 percent) of police officers in the United States have a four-year college degree. A little more than half (51.8 percent) have a two-year degree. 5.4 percent have a graduate degree and 12.6 percent have no degree at all.

If, indeed, the requirements were relaxed for the City of Niagara Falls as councilman Kennedy suggests, not only would Niagara Falls buck the national trend in terms of a well-educated work force, but it would be counterproductive to community policing, which he has voiced support for in the past, as statistics further show that part of understanding your community is learning the best ways of understanding crime and people.



Niagara Falls City Councilman Bill Kennedy taking on the role of a police officer during the course of his illustrious acting career.

Myers Hopes to Carry on Burmaster's Legacy as Lawmaker



Former Niagara County Legislator Clyde Burmaster.

Tony Farina

Irene Myers, a Town of Porter council member, has announced that she is a candidate for the Niagara County Legislature's First District seat in November that was held by Clyde Burmaster who passed away unexpectedly last month after serving as a county lawmaker for 28 years.

In a press release announcing her candidacy, Myers said "after much prayer and discussion, I felt the best way to honor Clyde was to carry on his legacy and fight for the residents he cared so much about."

Myers, R. - C., said she has received the support of Sue Burmaster to carry on her husband's legacy serving residents of the district.

In her announcement, Myers pointed to her love of the community

and her support of issues like Summer Fest, the development of a regional brochure, and working to procure funds for portable radios used in emergency management.

Myers said if elected, she would continue the aggressive fight against CWM's expansion, saying "if CWM wants to expand, they better hope someone else is elected instead of me. I will fight with every fiber of my body to prevent it. Not only is it the right thing to do but it's what Clyde would want to see happen."

Myers said she will focus on environmental issues if elected "to keep our communities safe from environmental threats," adding "we need leaders who will do everything possible to make our communities safe from environmental threats while having the vision to preserve our identity."

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THE CRIME

WEEKLY HEADLINES

-Niagara Falls Police responded to 300 block of Prospect Street in the afternoon hours of Tuesday, September 3rd, 2019, after reports of a suspicious person. According to reports, there was a male wearing a ski mask and swinging a stick. The male ran from police once they arrived and was not apprehended thereafter.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Woodlawn Avenue in the evening hours of Monday, September 2nd, 2019, after one of the officers observed an agitated man retrieve a long gun from a pickup truck and aim it at two police officers who had their backs to him. According to reports, the individual was detained and charged with two felonies for menacing a police officer and one count of disorderly conduct by creating a hazardous condition.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 400 block of 15th Street in the evening hours of Wednesday, September 4th, 2019, for reports of menacing with a weapon. Upon police arriving at the scene, a vehicle with multiple occupants sped from the scene. Two males ran on foot cutting through multiple yards and hopping over various fences. Officers were unable to catch up with the two individuals but did recover a long gun along with one of the runners cellphone. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 400 block of 5th Street in the evening hours of Wednesday, September 4th, 2019, after reports of a stabbing. According to reports, two males were fighting. The person who was stabbed said that the altercation



originally started after a glass bottle was shattered over his head. The victim was taken to the hospital and treated for injuries that he sustained.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to 1st and Niagara Street in the afternoon hours of Friday, September 6th, 2019, to wake up a person who fell asleep while waiting for the light to turn green. According to reports, the man was fully asleep and appeared confused after being woken up.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 600 block of 26th Street in the early morning hours of Saturday, September 7th, 2019, after reports of a larceny to a vehicle. According to the victim, more than \$2,000 in cash was stolen out of his vehicle.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to a 911 call in the early morning hours of Saturday, September 7th, 2019, at Robins Drive near the Ice pavilion for complaints of a group of women in a hammock smoking weed. Reports indicate no arrests were made as smoking weed is no longer illegal in New York.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Dollar General located at 8735 Niagara Falls Blvd. in the evening hours of Friday, September 6th, 2019, to investigate reports of a man yelling threats and obscenities at customers. Officers said they found Brian L. Benjamin, of Pine Avenue, walking in the 9100 block of Niagara Falls Boulevard continuing to yell and make threats of violence. Police said that he also threatened them before being taken into custody. As if that wasn't enough, after being transported to police headquarters he allegedly made a veiled threat and then flashed a knife-like object towards an officer while being removed from a police vehicle. Benjamin was charged with disorderly conduct, menacing a police officer and assault on a police officer.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 7-Eleven at 1504 Pine Avenue in the early morning hours of Sunday, September 8th, 2019, after reports that a 19-year-old Niagara University student was "body slammed" to the ground. The victim told police that he was out drinking with friends and that after they stopped at a Portage Road doughnut shop around 4 a.m., he wandered off into the adjoining neighborhood. According to police reports, he said that a man approached him and a fight ensued during which he was body slammed. However, an employee of the 7-Eleven told police that the victim had been approaching people in the area trying to buy pills and eventually purchased some crack cocaine. Afterward, he entered the store and the fight ensued. The assailant then fled the scene. The victim, who was white, declined treatment and police were even able to confirm with multiple people he was drinking with that he had, indeed, consumed drugs. Despite all of the facts unfolding as they did, police did not arrest the student but drove him back to his residence at Niagara University.

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Public Speaking Cont. from Cover

That goes for any and all of us; and it is seemingly very noticeable of late in our City Council Chairperson Andrew Touma. It really needs to correct itself.

It would seem that the noble councilman has become exactly like the chided bus driver who was finally called upon the carpet for not picking up the passengers that were actually waiting at the bus stops; except in Touma's case, the passengers are the good ideas from citizens who have more actual subject-matter experience than the chairman's fresh and biased knowledge that he often regurgitates from his lofty perch on the dais.

Though I have long been uncomfortable with the timed-presentations that the city's citizens get to express their problem-identifying insights and subsequent solutions – as opposed to the abundant time that some sanded finger-tipped developers get to practice at figuring out the combination and then working the dial to open up the city's coffers -- I didn't notice what Chairman Touma was saying about the five-minute citizen speaking limit until he began to pontificate about how gracious the council was to even allow any time.

To wit, he said, "We give more time than any other government in the area."

It was then that I began to think of him in the same way that the wayward bus driver's supervisor obviously thought of the driver: he just doesn't get it.

When the supervisor began to chastise the driver for not picking up the waiting passengers, the driver angrily retorted, "Well what do you want me to do, pick up passengers or run that #\$\$%^&* bus on time!"

Of the biggest problems that the city councils have had of late is in that most of them have never attended a city council meeting until they are considering a run for a council seat. Upon the very few times that they do attend, by observing what the observed councilmembers do during their meeting, it is easy to understand how any potential candidate easily comes to the conclusion that any fool can do what the council does during their meetings, and then the observers decide to set themselves out to prove themselves right.

Sadly, they are successful in proving themselves to be just slightly worse than their foolish predecessors, but much more much like the degraded printed copy that goes on the copying machine's glass in order to make a printed copy of a printed copy of a printed copy and so on. Unfortunately, they never come to realization of how they got the city to exactly where they voted it to be.

I started going to council meetings in the early 1980s when people like Anthony Quaranto held the gavel for people like Katherine Golanka, Victoria Fama and others. The committee form of council then met twice before voting on anything; once in the Committee of the Whole ante-chambers to

discuss the issues and often allowing the subject-expert citizen to take their time to illuminate them on agenda items, then they'd meet on a subsequent day where they would have their legislative voting meeting.

Even then the council engaged the speakers, bringing them to summation of their well-thought-out points as they "schooled" the council as to what they should or should not be doing.

After all, in side-by-side comparison of the bus driver and his supervisor, the council acts as the bus driver and the citizen should act as the supervisor.

As the years flashed by both the council and the city's population began to get smaller and smaller -- in body count, in pay and in mind -- and we now find ourselves where we are. I am waiting for Chairman Touma to accidentally slip up and blurt out, "Well what do you want me to do, pick up good ideas from the citizens or run this #\$\$%^&* meeting on time!"



Niagara Falls City Council Chairman
Andrew Touma.

As former Councilman Bob Anderson often had said while shaking his head, "It's sad, so sad."

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Cellino Leads Effort to Help Niagara SPCA Find Homes for Animals



Tony Farina

Ross Cellino is widely known as a personal injury lawyer, but he recently teamed up with former sports broadcaster Ed Kilgore and writer Gary Hoy to help the Niagara County SPCA find homes for animals looking to leave their cages for a better life.

"My family has always had dogs and I'm just happy to be a part of this effort to find homes for these animals," said Cellino during a visit last week to the shelter on Lockport Rd. in the Town of Wheatfield.

With help from Kilgore and Hoy, Cellino teamed up with Tim Brennan of the SPCA to form the Sponsor a Cage program and became one of the sponsors, paying for the care and food of an animal housed at the shelter and waiting for adoption.

The goal is simple: find sponsors from the community whether businesses or individuals, to pay for an animal's care at the shelter, including medicine, with all money from sponsors going directly to the SPCA to provide for the needs of animals currently housed there and looking for homes.

There are rows of caged animals desperately looking for homes at

the shelter, and the effort to empty cages and find them loving families is a wonderful goal and Cellino is sponsoring Angel, a loving nine-year-old dog with eyes just crying for help.

The SPCA says sponsors of the animals in the new program will receive photos of pets with their new owner after adoption, and Kilgore says the new partnership is a wonderful opportunity to give these animals a chance at life. The sponsorship program provides cash every month for the SPCA with all of the money used to provide for the needs of animals at the shelter.

For businesses and others looking to sponsor a cage and help an animal find a loving home, you can call or text Kimberly at 716-799-7115 or visit www.Cellinospca.org for more information.

It is truly a wonderful program that tugs at your heart during a visit to the shelter with so many animals just looking for a family to take them out of their cages and give them a home. Cellino deserves a tip of the hat for leading this effort and providing the resources to get it started. We are hoping it is a great success story and we will revisit in the spring to provide an update.

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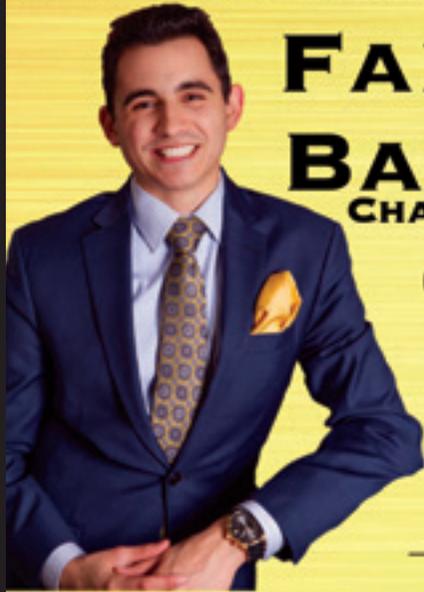
It's not unusual to encounter wildlife when working in outdoor construction, particularly if the construction site or work zone is located close to natural habitats or areas that have recently been developed. Most of the time, these chance sightings are harmless, but workers should be aware that contact can be hazardous. This is particularly true if the animal exhibits behaviors that aren't typical, such as not showing a natural fear of humans, being unusually aggressive or appearing at an unusual time of day. These behaviors can indicate the animal has rabies, even if it doesn't appear to be sick. Rabies can be transmitted to humans, domestic pets and livestock through a bite, scratch or by contact with saliva during handling (whether the animal is alive or dead). Without prompt medical treatment, rabies is always fatal. Rabies treatment consists of a dose of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and rabies vaccine administered over the course of two weeks.

Rabies was confirmed in 49 states and while wild animals accounted for the majority of cases, rabies was also confirmed in cats, dogs, cattle and horses. While cases of rabies in humans are rare, exposure to animals that could be infected with rabies is not. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in 2018, about 55,000 people in the U.S. received post-exposure treatment after contact with a potentially rabid animal. That's because there is no treatment once symptoms of rabies appear, which can be anywhere from several weeks to several months following exposure. Rabies fatalities occur when people fail to seek treatment, usually because they don't understand the risk. In 2018, one of those deaths was a six-year-old boy in Florida who was scratched by an infected bat. The child's father washed the wound, but didn't take him to the hospital.

Rabies is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system and eventually reaches the brain. Only mammals can get rabies; birds, fish, turtles and lizards do not get the disease. Bats, foxes, raccoons and skunks are the main carriers of rabies. Small rodents and other wild animals are almost never found to be infected with rabies and have not been known to transmit the disease to humans. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, cats are the most common domestic animal to get rabies because many owners do not vaccinate their pets and allow them to wander where they can be exposed to rabid wildlife.

If you think an animal has rabies, don't touch it, and never pick up dead animals. Call the police department or animal control. If you're bitten or scratched, wash the wound with soap and water, then immediately go to your nearest health care provider for treatment. Avoiding contact with wild animals or stray cats and dogs is the best way to protect yourself from being exposed to rabies when on the job and at home. Do not feed or handle them.

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