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## Council Candidate Makes Bid for Female Leadership in Falls



(Cont. on pg. 2)

## Surcharge Plan Likely to Win Council Support

By: Tony Farina

It appears the Niagara Falls City Council will overwhelmingly pass the  
(Cont. on pg. 3)

## The GOOD, The BAD, and The UGLY

By: John Spanbauer  
Candidate for NF City Council

As many of you know, I have thrown my hat into the political arena for the first time as a candidate for Niagara Falls City  
(Cont. on pg. 6)

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## THE CRIME

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Niagara Falls

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# NIAGARA FALLS

## Female Leadership Cont. from Cover

By: Tony Farina

*Analysis*

Alicia Kenyon, a Democrat seeking election next month to the Niagara Falls City Council in a very competitive race, apparently wants to make sure voters know that she is a strong woman in a political world dominated by men.

If elected, she would be the only woman from Niagara Falls to hold elective office on the council, the Niagara County Legislature, or the Niagara Falls Board of Education.

In a social media posting and possibly in campaign literature, Ms. Kenyon harkens imagery recalling the iconic Rosie the Riveter, featuring a picture of her and her daughter flexing their muscles and announcing, "We Can Do It!"

Is that pandering to women voters? Perhaps she believes playing the 'gender card' will give her an edge.

Kenyon, a longtime ally of out-

going Mayor Paul Dyster, is one of four candidates for two seats on the council, and as she states, she is the only female in the race.

She has run twice before under her maiden name Alicia Laible. Maybe her gender appeal will help her more than her political résumé.

We'll leave that for voters to decide and wish her the best.



## Zajac Calls Wants Ethics Board to Investigate Virtuoso

Tony Farina

As Democrat Dennis Virtuoso of Niagara Falls seeks his 15th term in the Niagara County Legislature, he has come under attack from his Republican rival who wants the County Ethics Board to investigate Virtuoso for what he called "a disgusting abuse of his position" to find "dirt" on him.

The charge comes from David Zajac who claims Virtuoso used his position as a legislator to gain information from Zajac's personnel file, "sensitive personal information," that was then given to the media and members of the legislature's Democratic caucus.

"Not true," says Virtuoso who has led the Democratic caucus for 18 years although he admitted to calling the county social services office to check on reports of a DWI arrest of Zajac in 2015, wanting to know if he had included that in his application for a job driving children which he no longer holds.

"They said it was taken care of," said Virtuoso who has been a thorn in the side of the GOP majority for years. He denied he leaked the information about Zajac's driving record to the media although he conceded he may have mentioned



Niagara County Legislator Dennis Virtuoso from Niagara Falls.

it during an interview on the Sal Paonessa internet radio show.

Zajac, who works in county social services, charges that four weeks before the election, Virtuoso suddenly "had a burning desire to see if there's anything in my personnel file that he can use against me politically. Unfortunately for him, he found nothing."

Zajac wants the Ethics Board to present their findings to appropriate agencies, including the Sheriff's office, county attorney, and the district attorney's office when they have completed their investigation.

# NIAGARA



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# HAMILTON: Kimble Owes YOU an Apology



**Ken Hamilton**

A photograph was taken and placed on Facebook whereas former Niagara County Legislator Renae Kimble was standing with and in support of mayoral candidate Glenn Choolokian. I don't mind that, I like all three mayoral candidates to varying degrees. Around the same time, October 9th to be exact, a letter to the editor of the Niagara Gazette appeared in the paper under the title of 'Niagara County Legislature owes Renae Kimble apology for oversight.' The Niagara Chapter of the NAACP's so-called president Shirley Hamilton is supposedly have penned it. Given Kimble's 18-year long track record as a legislator, it's more like it's Kimble who continues to owe an apology, not only the those of the statistically poorest and least educated district in the county, but to the legislature and county itself.

The letter was apparently written to extol the virtues of Shirley's bosom-buddy, Kimble. I have read virtually everything that Kimble has ever published in the newspapers, and read as well her once joint \$35-million lawsuit against two sets of her constituents – her political mentor's wife and daughter, wife Alma Brown and daughter Cynthia Brown-Saunders as one set for \$17.5-million, and little ol' me being hit for the other \$17.5-million. Alma died soon thereafter.

Having read much of what Kimble has written, as myself a writer, I can read words in the very same way that musicians read music. A musician can look at an arrangement on a sheet of music and actually

hear those notes singing in his or her ears. Likewise, a writer can see the paragraphed arrangement of words on a sheet of newsprint and hear the voices of the ones who actually wrote the pieces. If Shirley actually wrote Kimble's extolling letter, and she was doing it "solo" with her pen, then the manifestation of her voice was "so low" that the only voice that I could hear was that of Kimble's, albeit some of what Kimble has written have actually been good and on point, though almost always braggadocious. I sincerely doubt if Shirley actually wrote that letter.

But it all takes my mind back to something when folks my age were kids and were mesmerized, even though it was coming over the airwaves in crackling sounds falling into our black and white television sets. It was that of the still-lipped voice of ventriloquist Edgar Bergen as it flowed through the head of Charlie McCarthy, the well-dressed, wooden-headed dummy that sat upon Bergen's lap. I can only imagine it in terms of Renae and Shirley.

Anyway, the timing of Shirley's love letter to Kimble couldn't have come at a better time than in that silly season of politicking. It now has been extended to start February -- when the sound of candidates confusingly standing on the snowy porches of voters and not knowing if the knocking is of their knuckles on the door or their knees slamming against each other -- to November when sometimes the voters stay home on Election Day because of upstate's coldness. What hangs between the two dates is the July 26, 2019 Gazette editorial that proclaims, 'We need a plan of action for north end community center.'

In the 'plan of action' editorial, the editor writes, "Looking back is not an answer. 'The history of the center and the issues with management that led to its eventual closure are well documented.'

And well documented it is; but in the Gazette's politeness, most of the managerial problems fall squarely upon the laced laps of the team of Renae and Shirley; and in Shakespeare's words in *The Tempest*, unless the community, and city and community leaders understand what happened, then just understand that "... the past is prologue."

One of the things that likely led

Kimble into Choolokian's camp wasn't a particular love of Choolokian. As it is with many Niagarans, and why we are where we are, people often campaign more against whom they hate -- even if it might be better for them -- than for whom they love, who often bring nothing to the table other than just that.

As I said before, I like mayoral candidate Jeffrey Elder for his military experience and his big-budget management while working for FEMA; for Choolokian for helping us to get north Main Street designated as a special enterprise zone that ultimately led to Blue Cardinal Holdings buying up much of the property for near-future development; and Robert Restaino in supporting my Kalfas Magnet School project in his understanding the need of African-American kids needing to know more about their ancestry than just slavery and civil rights. And in the case of Restaino, in his taking on our case in try to wrestle the control of the then-dilapidating Niagara Community Center (Kimble's Kastle) and putting it back in the hands of the community. I can understand Kimble hating Restaino enough that she would flee into the political refuge of the Glenn.

It was also funny to see what through Shirley that Renae had listed as some of her accomplishments. They contend that, "The leadership of women has been undervalued in America," Shirley's letter said. She continues, "Women have strived for equality, happily winning some notable battles; still pressing forward to break down all glass ceilings."

Yet, I don't see a glass ceiling when I look at Kimble's Kastle, all I see are broken glass windows!

They continue, "Many times the accomplishments of trailblazing African American women are de-valued and expunged from the history books by the mere stroke of a pen." I see it hushed in inkless ribbons where keystrokes of old Remington typewriters only make unreadable indentations of warnings upon blank white sheets of paper, recording misdeeds of at least one trail-burning African-American woman whom was responsible for creating what devolved from Democratic/Republican caucuses that once swung from one party to the other every four to six years, to



**Renee Kimble**

one that simply is a politically majority-minority caucus where the only Democrats are the powerless in Niagara Falls.

One of Kimble's so-called merits of which Shirley supposedly wrote was the creation of an even less-empowered racial minority-majority district that is the most powerless district even in the powerless Niagara Falls, and so inept that its current legislator is considered the Laughingstock of the Legislature.

No Renae, the county owes you nothing in the way of accolades for being the county's "first woman vice-chair", as you put it. Other than thanking you for the power that they now hold that was once Niagara Falls', but both Shirley and you do owe your own people the biggest apology that you can give -- the farewell that you suckered them into giving you \$40 apiece.

But according to the Buffalo News, it says that Niagara County Legislator Rebecca J. Wydysh, was named the legislature's vice chairwoman "by the Republican caucus ... making her the first Republican woman to hold that position."

And please, if you did so, take credit for what your pen wrote -- you are better than that, Rev. Kimble.

## Surcharge Cont. from Cover

tourist parking surcharge resolution sponsored by Kenny Tompkins by at least a 4 to 1 vote this week (Wednesday), but it most likely faces long odds to win approval at the state level which would be needed for it to become a reality.

Tompkins is pushing the resolution to bring in revenue to cash-starved Niagara Falls by adding a \$5 surcharge to vehicles and \$20 for every bus that use the state parking lots every year during tourist season, a tax that would benefit the city of Niagara Falls. There would also be a \$2 surcharge for attractions within the state parks.

Tompkins, a Republican, appears to have the support of the three Democrats who make up the council majority but his fellow Republican Chris Voccio is concerned about the use planned for what he calls "magical money," possibly as much as \$12 million to \$14 million a year, if it happens to materialize.

Voccio doesn't think enough planning has gone into the measure, including discussions with state lawmakers, and is not sure how he will vote on the resolution at Wednesday's meeting. Voccio has consistently argued the city has a spending problem and lawmakers need to address that issue by making tough decisions, not pulling in dollars with no plan in sight to reduce expenses.

State Assemblyman Angelo Morinello, a Republican like Tompkins, seems lukewarm to the idea, saying no one has talked to him about it, an early sign that state approval of such a surcharge would have tough sledding given that other communities across the state might like the same deal.

However Council Chairman Andy Touma strongly supports making the effort to win state backing for the parking surcharge in a community where millions



The Niagara Falls City Council.

come every year, saying he would personally travel to Albany to lobby state lawmakers to help the city as it fights to survive difficult times made even more difficult by the loss of gaming revenue because of the dispute between the state and the Seneca Nation.

Meanwhile, Touma, Tompkins, and Voccio have their hands full as

they deal with closing a projected \$4-plus million hole in next year's proposed budget. The proposal from the mayor to close that deficit includes a garbage user fee of about \$218 a year, a slight increase in the tax levy, and about a dozen layoffs across the board.





# THE CRIME

## WEEKLY HEADLINES

-Niagara Falls Police, with the assistance of the Niagara County Sheriff's K-9 Unit, responded to the 7-Eleven on the 2700 block of Niagara Street in the evening hours of Monday, October 7th, 2019, for an attempted robbery. According to reports, the suspect entered the 7-Eleven covered in shopping bags. In all, he had plastic bags as pants, as a shirt and on both arms. He also wore a bag over his head with cut-outs where his eyes were so he could see. Police believe the bags were to conceal his identity, but fingerprints lifted from the crime scene, as well as DNA evidence from the plastic bags he discarded in the 600 block alley between 27th and 28th Street, gave police enough information to take the man into custody after tests were conducted.



-Niagara Falls Police responded to Frankie's Donuts in the late evening hours of Tuesday, October 8th, 2019, after reports of an



armed robbery. According to reports, an employee stated that a white male, approx. 6 ft. tall with plastic bags around his hand and what appeared to be a gun demanded money from the register. The suspect left with an undetermined amount of cash, but left a plastic bag behind as well as a blue sweatshirt. This suspect was later caught by police.

-Niagara Falls Police engaged in a foot chase in the late evening hours of Tuesday, October 8th, 2019. According to police, Myquan Pringle, who law enforcement considered dangerous due to his criminal history, led Police officers on a foot chase for more than thirty minutes. Pringle was eventually caught and subsequently arrested in the 500 block of 18th Street. Crime Stoppers was offering up to \$2,500 for information leading to the arrest of Pringle prior to his foot chase with police.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 9800 block of Niagara Falls Boulevard in the late afternoon hours of Thursday, October 10th, 2019, after calls of shots fired. According to reports, Police say a suspect fired shots out of a moving vehicle at another vehicle that was occupied by multiple people. There was a toddler in the vehicle as well. No injuries were reported and Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded in the evening hours of Thursday, October 10th, 2019, after reports of shots fired at a vehicle. According to reports, at least one shot actually hit the vehicle. The victim reported to police that while turning onto Ashland Avenue from 11th Street, he cut off another person whom he did not see driving at a high rate of speed down the street. The suspect got upset and fired one round at the victim. No injuries were reported.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to 19th and Elmwood in the early morning hours of Friday, October 11th, 2019, after reports of two males fighting. According to police, one male was using a metal stick and the other was using a fishing pole.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 1700 block of Elmwood Avenue in the evening hours of Friday, October 11th, 2019, after reports of shots fired.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 1300 block of Elmwood Avenue in the early morning hours of Sunday, October 13th, 2019, after reports of a life-threatening stabbing. According to police, a male was transported to ECMC with a serious stab wound to the chest and the female accused of stabbing him is in police custody. Child welfare was requested to respond to the scene for a 10-month-old baby who was in the home at the time. Unusually, police were having difficulty having someone from Child Protective Services respond to the call, but eventually contacted a family member of the child and gave the child to them. Police are continuing to investigate what led to the incident.

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# GOOD, BAD & UGLY Cont. from Cover

Council.

It's been an experience that reminds me of one of my favorite movies, Clint Eastwood's 1966 "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly." As a novice politician, the title pretty well sums up my first experience in the world of politics.

**THE GOOD.** During the campaign, I have reached out to many people for feedback on how to move our city forward. They have included former and current council members, community activists and, most importantly, the taxpaying citizens of Niagara Falls. The people I have met and the conversations we have had have been wonderful. If it were not for my desire to improve this city, I would never have met Dan Davis, a local historian who has a great idea for a historic and entertainment district in our city, and Mary Jo Pellow, a community advocate who manages a Facebook page entitled "The Good Things About Niagara Falls." The page provides all positive posts about our city and events.

I also have had the opportunity to meet and discuss our city with Tom Christy, who started the Civics Project to educate the public about its civic responsibilities. One of Tom's interests, which is a common interest for most people in Niagara Falls, is to find out why, with a natural wonder in our back yard, the City of Niagara Falls isn't doing better.

Then there is Frank Lupisella, a high school friend who was raised on 17th street, next door to the Boys & Girls Club. Frank and his wife, Cathy, moved from this area in 1984, and have never returned. They are like many other Falls residents who wonder why the city has deteriorated. Frank and Cathy are some of my biggest supporters, even though they don't live in this

area. They are supportive because they want to see this city make a comeback so they can bring their children and grandchildren back to the place they call home.

Going door to door and meeting residents has been another positive experience, most of the time. One particular incident I will always cherish is when I knocked on a door of an elderly woman. After I introduced myself, the woman came out onto her porch and gave me a hug. With tears in her eyes, she stated, "Your mother and father would be so proud of you!" This delightful woman was good friends of my parents 40 years ago.

I have had the opportunity to learn about so many community groups and organizations that have one common goal--to make our city a better place in which to live, work, and invest.

I have been overwhelmed by the number of people who have supported my campaign--some I have known for many years, while others I have recently had the opportunity to meet.

These are just a few examples of the good things I have experienced in the political world.

**THE BAD.** When I first entered the political arena, many people told me not to trust anyone. I found out quickly they were right! I had one "supporter" ask for a yard sign, sign my petition, and tell me how much he wanted me to win. Then, on primary day, he posted on Facebook telling people not to vote for me, but for a candidate I was running against.

Facebook is a story in itself. I was told that, in order to win an election, I would need to be active on Facebook. So I started a Facebook Page called "John Spanbauer for City Council." I was unaware of the keyboard courage so many



Niagara Falls City Council Candidate John Spanbauer.

Facebook users have. They had no problem criticizing me and telling me how unqualified I was for deciding to run for a council seat.

I also experienced a very disappointing situation where a union president sent out a communication to his membership on the day of the primary election, telling the membership not to vote for me. I do not have a problem with such a communication, if it paints an accurate picture of what I stand for. But the communication provided only a portion of the platform I represent. I spoke to the source of this communication and requested that, in the future, my entire platform be shared so that the union membership gets a full picture of who I am and what I stand for.

I am still amazed at the closed-mindedness of some of our residents, when it comes to their voting choices. As I go door to door, on several occasions I have had residents shut the door on me once I have identified myself as a Republican candidate. In a city that is in critical condition on many fronts, I would think residents would put political parties aside and vote for the candidates who will be an advocate for the taxpayer, and bring fiscal responsibility to the city. It shouldn't matter what party the person represents. I have always voted for the best person, not the party. I hope our residents do the same. This city's taxpayers can't afford to continue "business as usual".

**THE UGLY.** Without a doubt, the city budget and the budget process are what I find most alarming since entering the political field. The budget is as ugly as it can get. I still am trying to get a grasp on how the city leadership has continued to mismanage the city's budget after numerous organizations have provided guidance and suggestions to improve budget operations. The NYS Comptroller's Office, the NYS Financial Restructuring Board and the city's Financial Advisory Panel have all made recommendation to our city's leadership (current

& past) about our budget deficiencies, and these recommendations have fallen on deaf ears!

Recently, the state comptroller's office announced that Niagara Falls was one of 10 municipalities statewide that are designated as experiencing "significant fiscal stress." Niagara Falls was the only city in Western New York that made the list. Our city also holds the distinction of being one the few municipalities to appear on the list for the second year in a row.

The city's leadership must do a better job of managing the budget and reduce the cost of city government before asking the taxpayer to pay more. I have heard loud and clear from residents who have said that if there is an increase in taxes or added user fees, they will move out of this city. We can't afford to have anyone with disposable income move out of this city. I love living in the city of Niagara Falls, but I fear for the place in which I live. The financial health of this city is in critical condition, and must be addressed!

I do not consider myself a politician, so entering the world of politics has been a learning experience. John Spanbauer, the semi-retired guy who wants to play golf and enjoy spending time with family and friends, does not want to be in politics. But John Spanbauer, the taxpaying citizen who is frustrated with our city government wants to be an advocate for the taxpayer to bring fiscal responsibility to our city. He is the person who wants to be your councilman.

Arthur Schoellkopf, who was elected mayor in 1896, stated, "Municipal government is business, not politics." If elected, I will use the skills and knowledge I gained over more than 35 years in the private sector to improve all aspects of city government. I will do my best to govern this city like a business. It is obvious that we can't run government as we have in the past. Change is needed!



Niagara Falls City Hall.



# Niagara County Legislator Jesse Gooch Promoted to Chair of Community Services Committee

Legislator Jesse Gooch has been named the new Chairman of the Niagara County Legislature's Standing Committee on Community Services. Gooch was promoted to the new post by Legislature Chairman Wm. Keith McNall at the Legislature's September 19 meeting.

The Community Services Committee oversees a number of important county departments, including Social Services, Employment & Training, the Youth Bureau, the Office for the Aging, Public Health, Mental Health, Niagara County Community College, the County Clerk/DMV, the Historian, and Veterans Services.

Gooch has been a member of

the committee since January. The committee was previously chaired by Legislator Rebecca Wydysh, who stepped down after being named Vice Chairman of the Legislature.

"I became a Legislator to make Niagara County a better place for the next generation. By supporting and educating our children, protecting our community's health, and caring for our veterans, the Community Services Committee has a massive impact on the direction of the County," said Legislator Gooch. "The Committee was well served by Legislator Wydysh, and I look forward to building on her leadership."





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## OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Breast cancer is the second most common kind of cancer in women. About 1 in 8 women born today in the United States will get breast cancer at some point. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in women. It is estimated that in 2014 there will be 232,670 women and 2,360 men diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States alone. Additionally, 40,000 women and 430 men are predicted to die from the disease this year. The good news is that many women can survive breast cancer if it's found and treated early. A mammogram – the screening test for breast cancer – can help find breast cancer early when it's easier to treat. National Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a chance to raise awareness about the importance of early detection of breast cancer. The Laborers' International Union of North America is striving to make a difference! Here in Niagara County we are spreading the word about mammograms and encourage local communities, organizations, families, and individuals to get involved. We can use this awareness month as an opportunity to spread the word about steps women can take to detect breast cancer early.

Here are just a few ideas:

- Ask doctors and nurses to speak to women about the importance of getting screened for breast cancer.
- Encourage women ages 40 to 49 to talk with their doctors about when to start getting mammograms.
- Organize an event to talk with women ages 50 to 74 in your community about getting mammograms every 2 years.

We strongly encourage our female and male members to increase their awareness of breast cancer to protect themselves and family members. The importance of screening and regular self-exams is the first important step in early detection and treatment. Like all cancers, the earlier we can detect the onset of the disease, the more likely doctors are to successfully treat the disease. Join the national campaign this month by learning more about breast cancer and wear pink to show your support for those who have lost as well as those who have won the battle against this deadly disease.





# MATRIMONIAL LAW PERSONAL INJURY FAMILY LAW BANKRUPTCY



CHAPTER 7 & CHAPTER 13

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