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## Republicans Dominate Niagara County Races

*Jesse Gooch Overcomes Challenge from Hand-Picked Democratic Candidate Herbert in 7th District*



(Cont. on pg. 3)

## The End of the Dyster Era in NF

By: Frank Parlato

Robert Restaino has won the General Election and, with his win, the Dyster Era, with an ugly 12 years of depression and decline, rising crime, rising taxes, cronyism, and extraordinary waste, is over.

Now, for the first time in more than a decade, we can expect to see a city hall that favors Niagara Falls and its people over

(Cont. on pg. 2)

## Caroline Wojtaszek to Run for Niagara County Court Judge

By: Staff Reports

District Attorney Caroline Wojtaszek today announced her candidacy for Niagara County Court Judge.

Wojtaszek is seeking the position that will be left vacant in January 2021 by Judge Sara Sheldon's retirement. The primary will be held in June 2020. Judge Sheldon handles more than half of Niagara County's felony

(Cont. on pg. 7)

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# NIAGARA FALLS

## Ruling Could Bring Restaino, Senecas to New Beginning

**Tony Farina**

The mayor-elect of Niagara Falls, Robert Restaino, may be in a position to win a major financial victory in the coming days, and some observers think it could happen soon after he takes office in January or possibly even sooner.

There's no guarantee as yet that the Seneca Nation will make the \$256-million back payment to the state before Restaino takes office, but now that a federal judge in Buffalo has upheld last January's arbitration panel ruling in favor of the state on gaming compact revenue sharing, some believe the Senecas would pay rather than continue the fight.

"I think they will likely make the payment," said a source close to the Senecas, although he emphasized they could continue to fight the arbitration panel's 2 - 1 ruling against them. But the source indicated the Senecas have the money set aside to make the payment, suggesting that's the most likely scenario.

If they do make the payment, it will mean about \$35 million for Niagara Falls, allowing the city to repay the \$10 million advanced by the state to close the gap in the current budget and another \$25 million moving forward to deal with the coming year in addition to the resumption of revenue sharing payments. The latest ruling last week comes as the city is struggling

to find ways to close next year's \$4 million gap with a slight tax increase and a garbage user fee under consideration.

Several sources suggest it might be a way for the Seneca Nation and mayor-elect Robert Restaino to begin a new era of cooperation as outgoing Mayor Paul Dyster and the Senecas were never seen as on the same page, with Dyster an unblinking ally of Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Cuomo and the Senecas have rarely agreed on anything since the last casino gaming stalemate ended in 2013.

Restaino has been meeting with Senecas on a regular basis, and he said after winning election last week that he will continue to meet with the Senecas to find common ground. If the gaming stalemate truly has ended, it will be a great opportunity for both sides to get off to a great start on the next four years, leading up to the expiration of the current gaming compact in 2023.

"It could signal the beginning of a new relationship," said City Councilmember Chris Voccio. "I would hope that if it happens, we would use the [gaming] money in a judicious way, including for infrastructure and economic development, as it was intended."

The Senecas had taken their case to federal court following the arbitration panel's ruling, claiming their obligations under the gaming compact were completed in 2016,



Niagara Falls Mayor-Elect Candidate Robert M. Restaino.

saying the panel "interpreted that a new, unwritten obligation exists for the Seneca Nation," and it was their obligation to "defend our agreements for the benefit of others."

Officially, the Senecas say they will review last week's decision to determine how to proceed, but since continuing the payments will cost close to \$1 billion to the state up to 2023, it could take some time to make clear to the 8,000 members of the Seneca Nation of the need to move forward, if that's the decision.

The Senecas have already paid close to \$1.5 billion to New York

under the agreement for exclusivity rights which they feel have been compromised by various gaming venues promoted by the state within the jurisdiction.

As one source put it, that money will definitely hurt the Seneca Nation in many ways and may require a reduction in services to people on the reservation. But the options to continue the fight, including not paying and forcing New York to take them to federal court, may be less appealing than trying to move forward and work toward a new agreement in 2023.

# NIAGARA

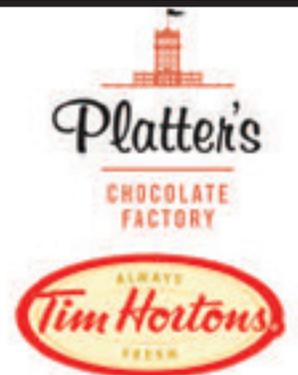


## REPORTER

**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

# End of the Dyster Era Cont.

Albany, Buffalo and New York City.

We will now see Robert Restaino, who emerged successful in the General Election by an overwhelming majority, put the city's best interests ahead of those who have held us down.

Restaino is of that type – a part of this community – without pretensions of being better than the rest of us. He is among us. Now Niagara Falls can come first for a while.

While Dyster was a beggar and a sycophant to the governor and to the Buffalo elite whose shoes he hoped to shine, he always looked down on the people here who paid his salary as a little unsavory, a little too dumb. Too unwashed, too lowly, to warrant serious consideration. He was embarrassed of us. And it showed.

He was a disaster as mayor – blowing through more than \$200 million in casino cash and then forgetting to insure that the casino compact was renewed with payments to the city. He cut off his own allowance.

Yet he always did what the governor or his Buffalo masters told him to do.

By massive, wasteful spending, he plunged the city into a \$12 million annual deficit. [Vince Anello, the last mayor, had a \$6.7 million surplus.] But Dyster handed out giant gobs of taxpayer money to any and all who would likely find votes for him.

And Seth Piccirillo, seemingly cut from the same spendaholic cloth, and who would have been as bad or worse, has now exited City Hall stage left before his former democratic



primary rival could fire him come January 1st, 2020.

Add all of Dyster's faults to Seth's immaturity, his poor temperament, his bad judgment, his willingness to play dirty tricks, all this added to incompetence and a habit of coming up with hare brained schemes, like paying people to live here and painting fire hydrants as leprechauns, it would have been a recipe for further disaster.

Restaino, on the other hand, is a real citizen of this city. Not a boy. But a man experienced in the world.

He can bring us back to where we were when the very competent Vince Anello was mayor. He can take us

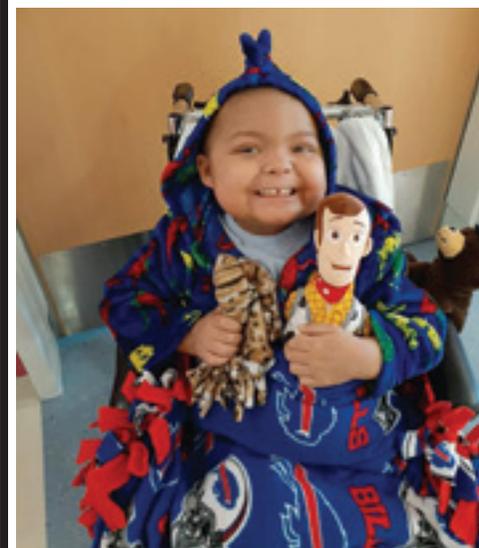
forward, erasing the terrible Dyster years when our population went down, but our cost of government went soaring up.

The laugh is on Dyster. He sold us out time and again, always expecting Gov. Cuomo to give him some big taxpayer funded job when he retired.

Restaino, a businessman, is not of that ilk. He will not bend the knee to Albany interests. Rather, he will stand for the residents in a City that needs real leadership now more than ever.

As of January 1st, 2020, our city returns to the people. This is a good day for Niagara Falls.

# Niagara Falls Boy Battling Leukemia in Need of Our Love & Support



Jaziah "Bams" Jackson just turned 4 years old and for the past almost 2 1/2 years he has a really rough road. Jaziah was diagnosed with Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML) at 20 months old. Since then he's had two bone marrow transplants and heart failure which led to open window heart surgery.

"Every day is a struggle," said Jessica Ferguson, Jaziah's mom, who sticks by his side every step of the way.

Jaziah and his mom have been at Oishei Children's Hospital since Feb. 2. He recently had to spend Halloween and his birthday there, too.

Fortunately tomorrow they will spend their last night in the hospital, but their journey isn't over yet. Jessica is a single mom and financially they are hurting because she hasn't been able to work.

"Since July last year we have been in between the Ronald McDonald House and the hospital," she said. "God bless his heart, he's doing good. But our fight is far from over. We have a long road ahead of us."

Ferguson says her son keeps her strong with his strength! Hes always in good spirits despite everything he's been through.

"He's strong, very smart, biggest personality ever..his heart is soooooo big!" she said.

We would like to help Jaziah and his mom during this difficult time so we've set up a GoFundMe page to help get them back on their feet. Please consider making a donation here: [www.gofundme.com/f/help-niagara-falls-boy-battling-leukemia](http://www.gofundme.com/f/help-niagara-falls-boy-battling-leukemia)

# Gooch Overcomes Herbert Cont. from Cover

**Tony Farina**

Democrats may have picked up one seat in the GOP-dominated Niagara County Legislature, but one seat they didn't pick up and had high hopes for was in the 7th District (Wheatfield, North Tonawanda) where incumbent Jesse Gooch turned back a strong challenge from Erik Herbert.

Gooch, owner of Painters Plus Home Decorating, had been appointed to the legislature in January to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Kathryn Lance, and he was expected to have his hands full with a very formidable candidate who had the strong support of Jason Zona, the county Democratic chairman. Gooch won by slightly more than 200 votes.

Zona said the GOP won because they employed what he called a "smart strategy," making the race about (Gov.) Cuomo and New York City Democrats that have no bearing here."

It was the only chance they had with a candidate like Gooch, added Zona, who he said didn't offer much to the district.

Not the case by any means, says Gooch, who credited his victory with a door-to-door campaign that resonated with voters. In other words, he says he outworked his opponent to win over voters.

"I worked very hard to deliver my message," says Gooch, and the voters responded.

Gooch added that Zona's claim of the GOP strategy linking his campaign to Cuomo and New York City Democrats as the reason for his victory was off the mark, saying he won the race on the streets.

But Gooch did not discount the support from Cuomo allies to his opponent as playing a role in the campaign. But now that he's won a full term, he's anxious to get to work for his constituents in the district.

Zona, looking for some good news, said he was happy with Michelle Roman's victory in Lockport to become the first Democrat to win a full term as mayor in 20 years, although he's still sweating out two other major races that could haunt him for years.

Long-time Democratic legislative incumbent Dennis Virtuoso (6th District) holds a very narrow lead

over Republican challenger David Zajac with nearly 100 absentee ballots still to be counted.

And in another very tight race for an open seat on the Niagara Falls City Council, Republican John Spanbauer holds a small lead over Democrat Alicia Kenyon with close to 400 absentee ballots to be counted on January 20th.

If Spanbauer's lead holds up, it will give Republicans control of the council for the first time in five decades. If Virtuoso doesn't hold on, it will be a major defeat for Democrats as he is minority leader of the caucus.

Zona did win one seat on the legislature that had been on the Republican side as Anita Mullane upset Republican incumbent and legislature chairman Keith McNall by 80 votes.

Of course, Democrat Robert Restaino did score a huge win for mayor of Niagara Falls although Restaino was certainly the heavy favorite going in against his major opponent, Democrat-turned-Republican Glenn Choolokian.



# THE CRIME

## WEEKLY HEADLINES

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 1500 block of Cleveland Avenue in the late evening hours of Tuesday, November 5th, 2019, after reports of shots fired. According to police, law enforcement was dispatched around 9:45pm to a two-family home where 911 callers stated multiple rounds of ammunition were unloaded. Upon arriving at the scene, police discovered a total of 17 shell casings. Upon further ballistic testing, investigators found that fourteen bullets hit the house with some piercing through the walls and entering both apartments. Reports indicate that adults, as well as children, were in the home at the time of the shooting but no injuries were reported. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Valero Gas Station at 19th Street and Ferry Avenue in the early morning hours of Wednesday, October 6th, 2019, after reports of an armed robbery. According to police, one individual sustained serious injuries and was transported to the hospital for treatment.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 1800 block of Pierce Avenue in the morning hours of Wednesday, November 6th, 2019, after reports that a vehicle was shot at overnight. According to police, the vehicle was struck with at least seven bullets. Reports further indicate that one person was in the vehicle at the time of the shooting.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to multiple calls throughout the early hours of Saturday, November 9th, 2019, from individuals stating their tires has been punctured on the 400 and 500 blocks of Fourth Street. Some vehicles had all tires punctured while others only had one or two tired. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Rhode Island Avenue in the evening hours of Sunday, November 10th, 2019, after reports of shots fired. According to police, one person was shot at as he ran into a home. However,



he was not struck. Police also responded to two other incidents involving alleged gunfire in the same five-hour span. No injuries were reported from any incident on this date and police are continuing to investigate each separate incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center in the mid-day hours of Monday, November 11th, 2019, after reports of a dog bite. According to police, a woman sought medical attention after stating that she was attacked by a neighbor's pitbull while she was doing yardwork. She stated that she used a rake to try and keep the dog away, yet was most fearful for her small dog that was on the porch. Upon grabbing her back to the pitbull and grabbing her dog, the pitbull allegedly bit her several times in the buttocks. No charges have been levied at this time and the incident was reported to the Niagara County Department of Health as per their protocol.

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# HAMILTON: DePaul, Norstar & Raid on Buffalo City Hall - Is There a Relationship?



**Ken Hamilton**

Down Big Six!

With only two months left in office, and like the Biblical story of when David loaded a rock into the leather pocket of his slingshot -- in order to slay the giant Philistine Goliath, Niagara Falls City Councilman Ezra Scott picked up the stone of the often opposing spirits of community members, spun them together and released the political power that was necessary to deal a death blow to the previously-opposed mental health complex that the giant DePaul Properties Incorporated "had hope" for the Highland Community of that city.

Had "hoped" is the operative word of this Hamilton Analysis.

I sat in council chambers during the protestation meeting of DePaul hoping to build -- not just another low-income housing project on

Bloneva Bond Street across from the coveted St. John's African Methodist Episcopal Church, but a mental health facility to boot. But as far as I was concerned about low-income housing in the Highlands, over my personal and seemingly lone protestations, that ship had already sailed into the triangular harbor of a community that was bounded by railroad tracks and bridges on 2 of its sides, and the town line on its 3rd edge.

And that brings us to hope -- that's HOPE-VI, to be precise.

If a little bit of something good by no measure means that a lot of it is likewise even better. Already within the Highlands, which was designated and redlined as a "Negro" community in the early 1940s, after the start of World War 2 the federal and state government began pouring massive amounts of "war housing" into the city.

With the quickly-built cinder block walled and concrete floored war homes of Hyde Park Village off Lafayette Avenue already in place, the Center Court public housing project would soon join in as one of the subsequent seeds of poverty and racial divide that has now long been the herald of Highland.

Center Court was originally slated to go on Falls and 14th streets in the city's south-side (often called the Eastside in reference to the hydraulic canal that divided what was once the



The abandoned Community Center in the North End of Niagara Falls.

original village of Manchester), but that would have placed Negro housing across the street from the coveted Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church. Despite Adolph Hitler's German armies had already having taken over their native Poland, the Polish parishioners of that church just weren't having 134-units of housing that, post war, was slated for Negro occupancy.

The city councilmembers were faced with a dilemma in meeting the deadlines for the start and completion of the 300-unit brick and mortar project that would place 166-units of that project on Pine Avenue for post-war whites, and in the urgency of fulfilling the terms of the federal agreements -- and reelection, they moved the Negro project into the north-end's Italian neighborhood on Centre Avenue -- next to the old city ash dump. Soon thereafter, the Niagara Community Center picked up stakes and moved, and some years thereafter, NFHA executive director Stephanie Cowart allowed Center Court to dilapidate itself; and soon thereafter both the Community Center and Stephanie's new wood and vinyl HOPE-VI project would both be sitting on ashes. That project original was supposed to have 42 homeownership units that never materialized.

Mount Saint Mary Hospital built a clinic to service the growing needs of a community after the building of the both the NFHA's Jordan Gardens public housing project and the building of Unity Park by a Lutheran Church's investment arm. Fast-forward, with some 16 Christian churches now dotting the Highlands and the Vincentian Niagara University, the area was then chocked full of community programs to help the low-income neighborhood.

After the Community Health Center of Niagara was delayed inbuilding on the site upon which now sits the NFMCC's Golisano Center, they too moved into the Highlands, creating the perfect poverty pill to attract others to join them.

There should be little wonder why Rochester's DePaul Properties would want to join the Main Street

mission that was formerly a facility abandoned by the YMCA to further -- and I say this tongue-in-cheek -- give "hope" to the community.

But what one now-failed organization, the Highland Community Revitalization Committee, wanted to do with the weed-filled Norstar Development Corporation property across the street from the coveted St. John's AME Church upon which DePaul wanted to build, was to follow in the footsteps of the long-defunct Area One Community Preservation Corporation, was to build new homeownership units there in order to begin to balance out the Highlands.

From where the printed information came that cited Norstar Development Corporation was to build homeownership units on that property, I just don't know.

Nonetheless, I have to wonder if the noble DePaul's real reason for folding on the Norstar property had less to do with Councilman Scott's efforts, and more to do with the file folders that were to be pulled out of Buffalo's City hall during their most recent FBI raid.

What I do know, the perfect storm that draws poverty into Niagara Falls, and especially on Highland, are the Big HOPE --Sixes that profit from those most in needs. And like the game of Dominoes, it all starts with "Down Big Six!"



A photograph from the raid at Buffalo City Hall last week.



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## Wojtaszek Cont. from Cover



cases.

In January 2017, Wojtaszek became the first woman to serve as Niagara County's District Attorney. She has over 20 years' experience in criminal law, including 7 years as Judge Sheldon's Confidential Law Clerk.

As District Attorney, Wojtaszek has instituted numerous improvements to the organization and operation of her department. She started the "front-end prosecution" program in Niagara Falls City Court by restructuring her staff to handle domestic violence, homicides, gun-related offenses, assaults and home invasion prosecutions from arrest through trial. She has enhanced the use and capabilities of the Niagara Intelligence Crime Analysis Center by hiring a criminal intelligence officer, as well as using asset forfeiture money to purchase pole cameras for local municipalities. She started the "SafeCam" program to locate private business and residential cameras so that they can assist law enforcement.

Along with the Niagara County Office of the Aging, she has worked to improve the screening and prosecution of financial, sexual and physical abuse crimes against the elderly. Wojtaszek has worked with the Niagara County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to improve the investigation of sexual assaults on college campuses and to provide trauma-informed training to local law enforcement agencies.

Wojtaszek personally reviews all animal abuse cases in Niagara County and works closely with the SPCA to enhance animal cruelty investigations. Since becoming District Attorney, she has worked to triple the number of offenders placed on the Animal Abuse Registry. She is the recent recipient of the Taylor Award from the Niagara County SPCA for her work on animal cruelty cases.

Wojtaszek also was named one of Western New York's Legal Elite of 2018 and 2019 and one of the Power 125 Women by Buffalo Business First. This past year she was awarded the Women Lamplighters in the Law Award received from the Gender and Racial Fairness Committee for the Eighth Judicial District. She also received the 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award for Public Service from the University of Buffalo School of Law, Prosecutor of the Year by the Prosecutors Association of Western New York and the Emerging Leader Award from the YWCA of the Niagara Frontier.

Before becoming District Attorney,

Wojtaszek was a top prosecutor during the 12 years she worked as a Niagara County Assistant District Attorney in the Special Victims Unit. She earned convictions in numerous high-profile cases, concentrating on domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault cases.

Among the many others she successfully prosecuted during this time, she convicted an elementary school teacher whom molested six students in North Tonawanda. As one of the first women in Niagara County to lead the prosecution of a murder case, she gained the convictions of three defendants for the brutal murder of 16 year-old Jennifer Bolender in Niagara Falls. Wojtaszek successfully prosecuted a defendant for raping and terrorizing a young girl and slitting the throat of her younger brother in Wheatfield and convicted a serial rapist in Lockport.

Wojtaszek has long been a leader in the fight against domestic violence. She helped develop Niagara County's domestic violence protocols that later served as a model for district attorneys statewide. She coordinated training for lawyers and others working in the criminal justice system in dealing with those suffering from mental health problems. Additionally, she coordinated specialized training in the investigation and prosecution of cases involving Shaken Baby Syndrome. Wojtaszek also served on several committees including the Child Abuse Intervention Project, the Family Violence Intervention Project, the Domestic Violence Intervention Program and the Rape Crisis Advisory Board. She previously served on the board of the YWCA of the Niagara Frontier and was a member of its Domestic Violence Committee.

While earning her law degree at the State University at Buffalo she was head coordinator of the law school's Domestic Violence Task Force. She also worked as acting domestic violence coordinator for Niagara County while still a law student.

Before entering law school Wojtaszek graduated magna cum laude from the State University College at Brockport with dual majors in political science and sociology. As an undergraduate she studied abroad at Oxford University in England and worked as a congressional intern in Washington D.C.

She is 47 years old and lives in North Tonawanda with husband Henry and their three children.



## Registered Apprenticeship

The US and New York State Departments of Labor recognize and monitor registered skilled apprenticeship programs in NYS and throughout the United States. The Laborers' International Union of North America publicly promotes our successful model of labor-management registered apprenticeship programs to combat the growing emphasis on employer programs supported by taxpayers.

### What is Registered Apprenticeship?

**It's a job.** Apprentices start working from day one with incremental wage increases as they become more proficient.

**It's on-the-job learning and education.** Registered Apprenticeship includes on-the-job learning from an assigned mentor combined with technical training provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and institutions employing distance and computer-based learning systems.

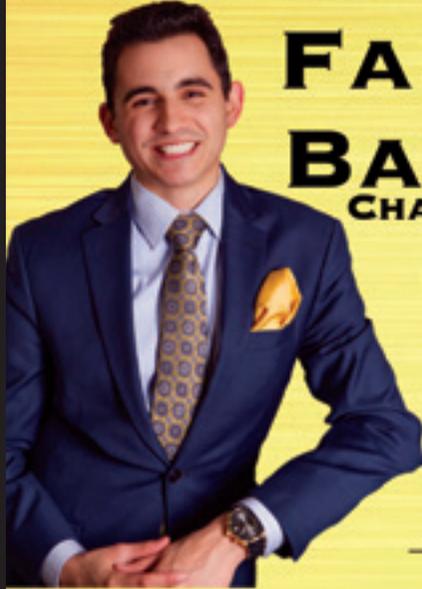
**It's a credential.** At the end of the apprenticeship, all apprentices receive a nationally recognized credential. Some apprenticeship programs offer interim credentials as apprentices achieve important milestones during their apprenticeship.

### What are some advantages of Registered Apprenticeship?

The benefits to employers are: more highly skilled employees, reduced turnover rates, higher productivity, lower investment in recruitment, a more diverse workforce, a new pool of workers and the creation of career pathways. The benefits to registered apprentices are: being nationally recognized and portable credentials, improved skills and competencies, higher wages as skills increase and career advancement.

Registered Apprenticeship programs are operated by partnerships of employers, labor management organizations and government. Apprenticeship sponsors – employers, employer associations and labor-management organizations – register programs with federal and state government agencies. Sponsors provide mentors, on-the-job learning opportunities and required technical instruction to apprentices. Incorporating Registered Apprenticeship directly into your workforce development system will strengthen your local and regional economy by offering highly trained and educated residents. Let Registered Apprenticeship be your competitive advantage. Laborers' Local 91 accepts apprenticeship applications the first Tuesday of every month from 8 AM – 12 noon at our training facility located at 4500 Witmer Industrial Estates Niagara Falls, NY 14305.

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