



**Garbage tote
arson latest
chapter in
long running
comedy sketch**



**Studies agree
methadone maintenance
bad for addicts,
bad for communities**



**Parking plan stalls
as key questions go
unanswered at
council meeting**

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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Studies Agree Methadone Maintenance Bad For Addicts, Bad For Communities

Mike Hudson

Niagara Falls—Assurances by promoters of two proposed methadone clinics here will be beneficial both to recovering heroin addicts and the community as a whole flies in the face of a pair of recent studies that agree that replacing heroin with the even more highly addictive drug methadone benefits no one except the big pharmaceutical companies and clinic operators.

Northpointe Council Inc., a not for profit organization with an operational budget of around \$4 million a year, wants to provide more than 200 addicts from Erie and Niagara counties with methadone at the former school district offices at Walnut Avenue and Sixth Street.

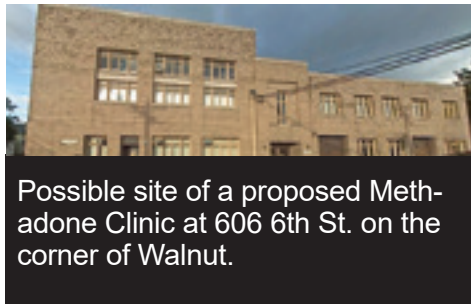
And Horizon Health Care Services, one of the nation's top drug treatment companies, recently paid \$360,000 for the former Pine Avenue headquarters of Fichte, Endl & Elmer Eyecare, announcing it would be turned into a methadone clinic as well.

"Methadone manufacturers, distributors and methadone clinics — whether tax supported or private—are part of a world-wide billion-dollar methadone clinic industry. Money talks, and big money talks louder. Public officials, the media and the public have bought the baloney: 'Since methadone clinics are everywhere, they must be okay,'" a report released in December by Novus, an organization dedicated to curing methadone addiction, states.

"Special-interest lobby groups, slavishly reported on by the media, continue to push the destructive lie that narcotic addictions are too difficult to try to cure, or in fact are impossible to cure. Political representatives, and even many in the medical profession, have bought the lie," the study states.

And a second study, conducted by Narconon, goes even further.

"Methadone is ostensibly the only effective treatment for heroin addiction,"



Possible site of a proposed Methadone Clinic at 606 6th St. on the corner of Walnut.

it states. "Proponents push for more clinics and greater availability of opioid substitution therapy (OST), as well as more long-term treatment. What they fail to mention, however, is that methadone is often more addictive than heroin, leads to a lifetime of 'treatment' (i.e., addiction), and often increases drug-related crime."

The Narconon study reports that, of methadone clients in Australia, 52 percent reported some criminal offending, with the majority being drug-related and property crimes. One fourth of the women on methadone treatment were involved in prostitution.

"A large percentage of methadone patients have already come into contact with the criminal justice system prior to entering treatment," the report states. "Although many people entering methadone treatment may genuinely be attempting to get better, the nature of drug addiction doesn't always allow things to end that way."

Instead of drug detox and drug rehab programs, which actually qualify as treatments, methadone clinics use the heroin-like prescription narcotic painkiller methadone to "treat" addictions to narcotics, switching patients from the original narcotic addiction to another narcotic, methadone, the studies agree.

Methadone was developed in Germany in 1937 because Germany did not have a reliable internal source of opioids. A synthetic combination of morphine and heroin, methadone was used to treat chronic pain. It acted on the same opioid receptors



The possible Methadone clinic [building at left] is next to the main Post Office on Main St.

as morphine and heroin, but the cost was far less and the duration much longer.

After the war, the drug company Eli Lilly introduced methadone to the United States, promoting it as a "cure" for heroin addiction.

Lilly promoted the theory that, because an addict only needs one hit of methadone a day, he or she would be freed from the constant need to find numerous hits of other narcotics such as heroin all day long. Although the person is still an addict, they might be able to get back to work or be with their families again.

But the bad news is that methadone is much more difficult to withdraw from than most of the narcotics it claims to be "treating," the studies agree. And the longer a person takes methadone, the more methadone they need, and the worse withdrawal becomes.

The end result is the well-known "methadone prison" which can last for decades, or until the methadone addict wanting to detox can find a methadone detox facility that accepts high-dose addictions.

Research indicates that methadone clinics are contributing to the alarming rise in methadone-related deaths—a 300 percent increase since 2000, substantially

more than the simple increase in methadone prescriptions.

Methadone overdoses killed about 5,000 people in 2015. It is four times as likely to cause an overdose death as oxycodone, and more than twice as likely as morphine.

From 2001 to 2014 there was a 6-fold increase in the total number of heroin deaths which totaled about 11,000 in 2014.

The FDA issued a public advisory about the dangers of methadone in 2006, and later required a so-called "black box" warning on all labels and changed dosing intervals from 4 to 6 hours to 8 to 12 hours. In 2008, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration urged methadone makers to limit sales of the most potent form of the drug to hospitals and addiction clinics. And in 2009, the Government Accountability Office issued a report highlighting the mounting deaths from methadone.

The idea of hundreds of drug addicts congregating at a methadone clinic just a short walk from one of the most spectacular tourist attractions in the world may not be an attractive one for Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster, who has yet to comment on the issue.

But then, he is the same Paul Dyster who has welcomed developer driven affordable housing projects which are home to registered sex offenders, criminal parolees and generational welfare recipients — some imported from New York City and elsewhere — who are born live and die in public housing and are subsidized by the taxpayers of Niagara Falls and Niagara County.

The methadone clinics, like the halfway houses and housing projects, have become the new model for "economic development" in this city.

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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Methadone Controversy Goes On: Swapping One Addiction For Another?

Mike Hudson

Type the words “methadone” and “controversy” into your Google search engine and you’ll quickly come up with more than 213,000 hits that demonstrate that methadone maintenance, as it is commonly called, is not the simple, safe and effective answer to addiction its’ proponents claim.

Even though leading health organizations promote methadone maintenance as a cost-effective tool to prevent HIV transmission and save lives from overdose and other drug-related activity, these programs continue to face criticism from traditional recovery groups, medical providers, and even users themselves.

“A motivated patient on replacement therapy can make astounding changes in a year,” Dr. Logan Graddy, who runs a maintenance program in North Carolina, recently told the Huffington Post. “Many change careers, go back to school, and turn their lives around to where they might have been before they started taking drugs. I’ve seen miracles happen.”

Former New York City mayor and one time presidential candidate Rudolph Giuliani has been one of the most vocal critics of methadone maintenance.

“I think methadone is an enslaver. It’s a chemical that’s used to enslave people,” Giuliani said. “If it’s necessary for transition, then of course it should be used for transition. If you’re going to keep somebody permanently enslaved to methadone for the rest of their lives, then I have real questions about your common sense.”

When methadone was first introduced as a treatment for those addicted to heroin and other opiates in the early 1950s, it was used for a short time to lessen the effects of withdrawal during the detoxification process.



Later, when large numbers of American servicemen began returning from Vietnam seriously addicted to heroin, the maintenance programs sprung up, replacing one illegal addiction with another, state sponsored one.

“The goal of our society should be self-reliant people — not normalizing dependency,” Guiliani said. “What’s happened is, the treatment of choice now among all of these doctors is methadone.”

A recent Canadian study conducted by a team under the direction of Dr. Aslam Anis of St. Paul’s Hospital in British Columbia found that just giving street heroin addicts prescribed heroin is more cost effective and has less risk of mortality and relapse than any methadone program.

“The treatment actually saves money and provides better outcomes,” said Anis. “The retention rate in heroin was double what it is in methadone.”

Recent medical studies have revealed that methadone addiction can cause sudden cardiac arrest. Prior to 2001, federal law did not allow methadone clinics to prescribe methadone doses higher than 100mg/day.

Successful lobbying from methadone doctors and businessmen who own methadone clinics changed the law allowing methadone clinics to use their judgment and push methadone doses much higher.

Florida Dr. Rick Sponaugle, who has spoken at the White House about methadone addiction, called methadone clinics “glorified drug dealers.”

Today, about a half million people in the U.S. are participating in methadone maintenance treatment programs.

“Many believe highly profitable for-profit methadone clinics create an unjustifiable conflict of interest, since they profit, from reducing counseling and medical treatment, while maintaining methadone dependency,” Sponaugle wrote. “Numerous methadone patients complain methadone clinics do not provide adequate methadone detoxification, to methadone addicted patients wishing to decrease or eliminate their methadone dependence.”

Today, about a half million people in the U.S. are participating in methadone maintenance treatment programs.

Drug Dealers Target Seniors

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency [ICE] warns seniors traveling abroad to beware of schemers who might trick them into smuggling drugs into the U.S., reports the Association of Mature American Seniors.

The traffickers figure that customs officers are less likely to search baggage belonging to elderly travelers. ICE says that the bad guys entice them via social media and fraudulent telemarketers with offers of free travel and other perks.

Special investigators said they saved one 97 year old man from falling victim to the scam before he took off on what he thought would be a free trip abroad.

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Garbage Tote Arson Latest Chapter In Long Running Comedy Sketch

Mike Hudson

Niagara Falls – A series of arson fires targeting city-owned garbage totes has become a serious enough concern that both Fire Chief Thomas Colangelo and Police Chief Bryan Dal Porto have asked for the public's help in identifying the culprits.

In the meantime, Colangelo warned, garbage totes should be kept away from the sides of homes and fences and instead placed in the rear or middle of yards. He also advised that totes not be left unattended outside of garbage pick-up times.

This past weekend, two fires spread from burning totes to ignite nearby residences. A fire in the 2400 block of Whitney Avenue Sunday spread inside a home and set it aflame, climbing an outside wall and through a broken window. Five people escaped with their lives.

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster's "recycling plan" has been troubled from the start. Startup costs of \$2.3 million to buy and deliver some 10,000 new blue (64 gallon) refuse totes and (96 gallon) recycling green totes, along with \$78,000 a year for city employees to oversee the program came at a time when the recycling industry is slumping badly.

Although Dyster claimed the program would save the city \$500,000 annually, it quickly became apparent that the city

would lose money. Small businesses faced increased costs and residents faced fines and other sanctions for not complying. Outraged taxpayers, led by Third Street businessman and longtime Dyster supporter Craig Avery, called publicly for the resignation of City Administrator Donna Owens, who Dyster credited for creating the plan.

In 2013, the last full year prior to Dyster's recycling plan, the city paid Modern Disposal Inc. of Lewiston about \$2.9 million for trash collection. In 2015, the first full year city residents will get to enjoy the fruits of Dyster's tote plan, taxpayers were socked with a whopping tab of nearly \$3.8 million.

Fire Chief Thomas Colangelo told the Niagara Falls City Council Monday his department has responded to a number of blazes in alleyways and near homes. The "heaviest concentration" has been reported in the Falls' mid-city and downtown areas – Whitney to Forest avenues between 18th and 24th streets – during the late evening hours, 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.

"The majority of them have been started in city-owned garbage totes," he said.

Colangelo noted that arson, even to a garbage tote, is a felony crime in the state of New York.

"I don't think whoever is starting these fires are aware of that," Colangelo said. "The fire and police departments are taking these fires very seriously and will not stop investigating until we find the person or



The Mayor and his mascot for the controversial trash removal and recycling program. Paul Dyster [l] and Totes McGoats [r].

persons responsible."

Police Superintendent Bryan DalPorto said that, although it may appear like a series of small crimes, the property damage to totes and structures will add up and his department intends to "fully investigate" the matter.

On the various Facebook pages dedicated to Niagara Falls news, this latest chapter in Dyster's trash plan folly was treated like a new episode in some bizarre television sitcom.

"How else do you expect all the homeless in the city to keep warm geez?" asked Matthew Newman.

Alan Chortie paraphrased the bumbling Sgt. Schultz on the old "Hogan's Heroes" comedy program. "With all the security cameras, and cell phones no one knows anything?" he asked.

Gregg Larkin brought up an earlier pratfall. James Dolson, the man Dyster picked

to play "Totes McGoats," described as the city's recycling mascot and children's liason, was convicted of dealing heroin.

"Totes McGoats was replaced with a cardboard cutout," Larkin wrote. "This is his way of getting even. Stick it to the man, Totes!"

Jeffrey S. Bykowicz joined in the fun.

"Has Totes McGoats been questioned?" Bykowicz asked.

One possibility overlooked by city officials and Facebook wags alike is that, perhaps, the garbage tote fires are a form of protest against a massive fail by the Dyster administration, similar to the rash parking meter pole cuttings that occurred when then-mayor Irene Elia attempted to push through an unpopular parking plan.

Stick it to the man indeed.

Woman Who Allegedly Stabbed Baby Daddy Surrenders, Is Charged With Second Degree Murder

The Niagara Falls Reporter received two communications from the Niagara Falls Police Department this week. The first came on Feb. 23. it read:

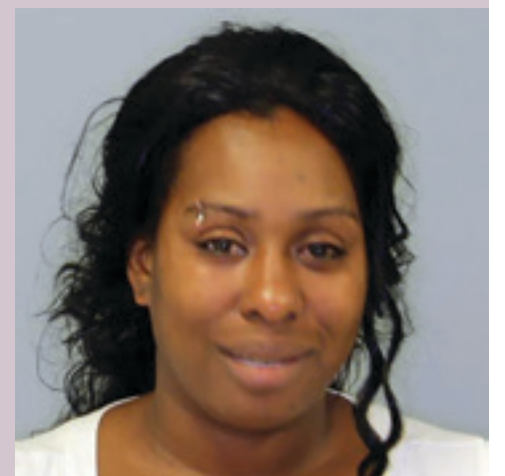
At 10:00 p.m. last night Niagara Falls Police Officers responded to 9 Monteagle Ridge for a reported as-sault. Upon arriving they found 39-year-old Antoine Mallory bleeding from a single stab wound to the upper right chest. Mr. Mallory was taken to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center where he succumbed to his injury. This case is being investigated as a domestic violence matter. The suspect and victim have two children in common.

Detectives, aided by the US Marshall's Task Force, are searching for: Chamia Nicole Johnson, 34 Years Old, Black Female, 5'4", 165 Lbs., 617 7th St Niagara Falls

If anyone has any information on her whereabouts, they should call NFPD at 286-4553 or 286-4711. There is no other information at this time.

A few hours later came the second email:

Chamia Johnson turned herself in to police headquarters at :100 p.m. She was subsequently charged with murder in the second degree.



The circumstances of the killing are not yet known. What led to the fatal fight may never be known.

What is known is that Chamia Johnson stands accused of murdering the father of her two children. The alleged death blow may have occurred after an argument and was likely unexpected. She had not evidently planned to kill the father of her children in advance, according to the charge of second degree murder. How quickly fortunes change in life as they most likely have forever for Chamia Johnson and the late Antoine Mallory and their two children.

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Mayor's Parking Plan Stalls As Key Questions Go Unanswered At Council Meeting

Anna Howard

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul A. Dyster had hoped to push through his parking meter installation plan at the February 22 council meeting, but an unusually vocal group of residents pummeled the council and mayor with questions regarding operating costs of the parking plan. As a result the plan was voted down, 4-1, with councilwoman Grandinetti being the lone yes vote.

Both the [Mayors Irene] Elia and [Vince] Anello administrations installed parking meters in the downtown and both of those plans ultimately, for different reasons, failed. Will parking meters operate more successfully under the Dyster administration than they did under the Elia and Anello administrations? Until the rowdy February 22 council meeting, the mayor had planned to have the first wave of meters installed downtown by Memorial Day. Unless Dyster can secure council approval for his parking plan at the next council meeting his Memorial Day installation target date is sure to get pushed back if not cancelled.

Mayor Dyster, during his Feb. 17th appearance on the WJL Tom Darro radio show, said the initial downtown "parking pay station" installation will "cost \$350,000" not the rumored "\$650,000." The bottom line eventual total installation cost was left unsaid. Also left unaddressed by the mayor was the eventual city-wide parking meter coverage. His Honor also failed to inform the radio



The price of public parking in downtown Chicago is reportedly the most expensive in America.

listeners as to how the parking plan was going to be administered, staffed and budgeted. So, plenty of questions remain unanswered. Questions that we first posed more than a year ago.

Parking plan questions:

The \$100,000+ consultant driven parking plan included "parking zones" and "implementation phases." That meant parking meters will systematically spread throughout the city. Are those "zones" and "phases" now going to play out as contained in the plan?

One popular Pine Avenue restaurant informed city hall last year that they would move their business to the Town of Niagara if meters come to Pine Avenue. Will the Dyster-Touma parking plan eventually locate meters

along Pine Avenue and other city streets?

What equipment, in total, is needed to implement the parking plan?: city hall office space, computers, office equipment, phones, vehicles etc.

What additional employees, salaries, overtime, pay raises and stipends are at play here? In 2013 the mayor unilaterally handed the city controller an annual \$10,000 stipend to administer the casino revenue account. That stipend was awarded in spite of the fact that from 2003 until 2013 the administration of the casino account was part of the controller's routine duties.

The parking plan called for the city to sign over/sell parking rights to a private company. The Reporter detailed how a similar

parking privatization plan in Chicago ended in scandal and financial loss for the Windy City. Does the Dyster parking plan and meter installation initiative sell the parking rights to a private entity?

Finally, the elephant in the room. It's been a very poorly kept secret that the monitoring of parking receipts at the city parking ramp and surface lots has been – how should we put this – rather sketchy as to the accuracy of its bottom line. We question why the city has steadfastly refused to install an automated system at the ramp and surface lots to better monitor the situation.

The Reporter predicts the parking plan will be heavy in administrative and employee costs. When all is said it won't turn a profit. Not after salaries are bumped up and stipends are handed out and insiders get jobs. Forgive us for being negative but the parking plan was designed by the administration that gave you a \$50 million courthouse, \$44 million train station, \$2.4 million trash totes, \$8 million deficit, \$64 million debt and \$100 million in casino revenue expenditures.

A December 2008 deal by former Mayor Richard Daley gave control of the city's meters to Chicago Parking Meters LLC, a consortium of investors led by Morgan Stanley, for 75 years, in exchange for \$1.157 billion. The money was spent in record time by the city and now for the next 67 years the city will collect nothing for its public parking while the private company continues to raise rates.

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Let Your Voice Be Heard! by Kenny Tompkins, Niagara Falls City Council



you spend money. This administration did not present viable plans for the spending requests they put forth. At this meeting, several speakers quickly addressed this, in particular with regard to the proposed parking meter purchase. Whether or not they were in favor of the meters, all of these individuals sent this message: "Do not allow this request to pass without a firm plan to make it profitable." I am here to tell you, your voice made a difference. As a council majority, we voted against this measure due to the lack of a clear and tangible plan. I believe the presence of several residents helped solidify, if not influence, at least one vote against moving forward on the meter purchase until the detailed plan we have long requested is presented (and no, Mr. Ken Hamilton's chicken cluck was not the influencing factor).

In addition to the parking meters, we heard from the community regarding the apparent lack of a management plan for the \$44 million train station opening in May, the \$500,000 golf course deficit, and the overall structural deficit of \$7.5 million. There were also numerous concerns regarding the proposed mega methadone clinic slated to be located in the core of the tourism district. With these concerns came not complaints, but facts, figures, recommendations, and even solutions. By far, it was a genuinely fruitful session.

With this in mind, I encourage more residents to attend council meetings. Arrive 15 minutes before the 6 pm session and sign up to speak on an item that is important to you. You are allowed five minutes to present your case. Please remember to be civil and stick to topics that concern the entire city. No personal issues or attacks are allowed.

Even if you choose not to speak, your presence is welcome. Your support for those who are providing input to improve our city is noticed.

While my fellow council colleagues and I

are there to listen, I believe that the mayor, the city administrator, and other department heads would benefit from staying for this part of the council session as well. They too should be able to hear what matters to residents and how people perceive the direction in which the city is headed.

The best part of living in the United States is the freedom we have to speak out either in favor of or against our government, be it local, state, or national. At the beginning of our working session, we heard from two LaSalle Preparatory School Junior Honor Society

members, Jazzlin Douglas and Johannah Petrishin, who shared what freedom means to them. They spoke not only of what we are free to practice, but also of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice so that we have these rights.

Please, do not take your freedom for granted. Come to a council meeting and let your voice be heard. Who knows? You might just make a difference in influencing a decision and have a positive impact on our city, too.

The next council meeting is March 7. The first session begins at 5 pm.

What can I say about the February 22 council meeting other than "Wow!"?

The community turnout for this particular meeting was far and beyond anything I have previously witnessed. This even includes meetings I attended before I chose to run for Niagara Falls City Council. Several people spoke and spoke loudly on both agenda items and for good of the community.

As a member of the city council, I applaud each person who came to the podium. It takes courage to stand before the council and address your concerns. Yet on this night, we saw not only regular speakers but new faces who were willing to lend their voices to push for more government accountability.

The topics on which residents presented were varied, yet one common theme resonated throughout: the need for this city's government to plan better when it comes to actions and spending. This was one of the main reasons I ran for office. I believe good government means doing your homework and having a reasonable plan in place before



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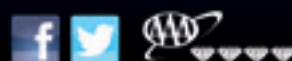


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State Parks Plan To Rebuild Bridges To Goat Island; Say They Will Follow Environmental Regulations [For A Change]

James Hufnagel

An October, 2015 Design Report/Environmental Assessment document jointly issued by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and the New York State Dept. of Transportation (NYSDOT) outlines the steps the two agencies will take to obtain the myriad regulatory approvals necessary to move forward with the construction of two new bridges in the Niagara Falls State Park.

Steps that State Parks has deliberately, repeatedly and illegally ignored in its pursuit of massive projects it has undertaken here recently, in violation of state and federal law and international treaty obligations.

For example, the \$50 million Niagara Falls State Park "Landscape Improvements" plan, the \$35 million Maid of the Mist Winter Storage Facility and the now-relocated Parks Police barracks next to it, all three with enormous environmental impacts, were planned and implemented with zero formal review under the law.

How exactly has State Parks skirted the rules?

The Landscape Improvements plan received a "negative declaration" under SEQRA from its lead agency, which was, surprise, State Parks.

A negative declaration means there are no anticipated environmental impacts, thus it was shielded from regulatory scrutiny. To accomplish this legal backflip, they contrived to split the plan up into separate, smaller projects, supposedly none large enough or with sufficient environmental impact to justify review through scoping sessions and public comment periods.

Try explaining that to the numerous local citizens who are outraged over the bulldozing, paving and fencing off of Three Sisters Islands – that there were no environmental impacts.

In addition, aspects of the Three Sisters "remediation" violated both the federal Clean Water Act and the international Boundary Waters Treaty, something we extensively documented, at the time it was taking place.

Both the initial Parks Police barracks and



State Parks is planning to reconstruct two Olmsted-inspired bridges to Goat Island in the Niagara Falls State Park, having ruined the century-old stone bridges in the first place by driving bulldozers and other heavy construction equipment over them.

Glynn's new boatyard were similarly rushed forward without benefit of SEQRA oversight, while a National Register of Historic Places application was summarily withdrawn to make way for the Maid drydocks. If a location such as the Schoellkopf site is even under consideration for such designation, as it was, a formal public process should have taken place before Glynn was allowed to go on his rampage there.

However, times have changed. In undertaking the bridge reconstruction, State Parks and the NYSDOT, according to the recently-released Design Report/Environmental Assessment, will endeavor to obtain the following laundry list of permits: Protection of Waters Permit, State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Permit, Coastal Zone Consistency Certification Statement, State Road Use Permits, Section 404 of the Clean Waters Act Nationwide Permits 3 and 33 (both of which they neglected to secure prior to the Three Sisters debacle) and Section 10 of Rivers and Harbors Act Permit.

Back in 1999, State Parks held a formal SEQRA process to evaluate alternatives for the Observation Tower in Niagara Falls

State Park. Ten years passed before local residents were again afforded the opportunity to critique proposals for state-owned and operated waterfront. That was the infamous April, 2009 south Robert Moses Parkway hearing at which State Parks representatives and their consultants appeared fortunate to exit the building in one piece.


It took a few more years before State Parks gingerly began dipping its toe back into the water, holding the recent series of bridge-replacement stakeholder hearings on August 6, 2013 and September 23, 2014 and January 27, 2016, where the public could "have its say".

In the meantime, the Landscape Improvements plan and the Glynn boatyard were rammed through, as was the police barracks, although the politicians, in the face of more public outrage, intervened in that one.


What should be taken away from all this?

Coming off a history of jealously guarding its fiefdom in Niagara Falls State Park for the benefit of Albany, Delaware North and Maid, running roughshod over the law and shutting out all local oversight of its lucrative tourist empire, State Parks is now making a big show of inviting public input on the design of a couple of bridges. Bridges which, everyone admits, need to be replaced eventually. And bridges which, for the most part, few who live here could care less about.

So State Parks doesn't deserve any plaudits for holding hearings and inviting public comment on an issue as mundane and commonplace as bridge construction, something that happens probably hundreds, if not thousands, of times across the country every year.



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Now That The Casino Cash Has Flown The Coop The Chickens Are Coming Home To Roost

Anna Howard

And so it begins. As the reality of the city debt and deficit sinks in – combined with the fact that the casino revenue is currently exhausted and dwindling for the coming years – city hall is frantically searching for ways to stem the tide of rapidly rising red ink.

Parking meters that will cost more to administer than return in profit are on Mayor Paul Dyster's drawing board for an installation by Memorial Day. The parking plan cost over \$100,000 and the bare minimum installation charge for the first wave of meters will cost at least \$350,00. To this you can add the stipends, overtime, equipment, pay raises and the Dyster-Touma parking initiative is a guaranteed money loser.

This week the raising of Hyde Park golf fees had the Facebook community buzzing. No sooner had council chairman Andrew Touma proposed a hike in golf fees than an effort to demonize the Hyde Park golfers had begun. The question as to whether the fees legitimately needed an upward adjustment was lost in the weeds straight out of the gate because – this being Niagara Falls politics – a group of residents (golfers in this instance) had to be attacked and vilified. To that end the golfers were essentially called retired,



cheapskate, former government employees looking for low cost recreation at taxpayer expense.

Lost in the demonization of the golfers is the reality that the Dyster administration has spent the city into the place at which it now finds itself: A fiscal quagmire so deep and dark and real that all the higher golf fees and

all the parking meters this side of Mars will not, cannot, repair the financial damage. Also lost in the debate is the fact that the mayor sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into a clubhouse roof repair and then recommended that \$320,000 in casino funds be spent on golf course cart paths.

The financial advisory panel can recommend higher recreation fees, higher property taxes through property reassessment and install parking meters from one end of the city to the other...but none of this will counter eight years of wasteful Dyster administration spending. The hard truth is that the city is in debt to a tune of \$65 million. The current budget deficit is at least \$7.8 million, the casino revenue is exhausted, and the city's annual share of that revenue continues to fall, each quarter.

The Dyster fiscal chickens have come home to roost and no amount of cosmetic tinkering with "revenue enhancers" will even begin to repair the damage done.



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Guido Payoff To Enable Hamister Just More Tax Money Squandered

Mike Hudson

Why was parking lot operator John Guido paid \$45,000 in public money last July to vacate the Rainbow Boulevard North property he leased from the city so that Buffalo developer Mark Hamister could begin construction of his proposed hotel?

While at least five other hotels have been built in the city since the Hamister project was announced, the former parking lot remains vacant.

Last June, the city sent a letter to Guido stating that he needed to vacate the property as per his 2009 lease agreement, which was modified in 2011.

Under the terms of his agreement, Guido had to leave once a building permit was issued for the hotel project and one had been, the letter said. Guido needed to be out by July 27.

Guido promptly sued, on Friday, July 24 and, by the following Monday, July 27, the case had been settled. Try going through the past century's worth of city litigation to find a single case that has been resolved as quickly. You won't.

Under the terms of the settlement, Guido received a \$45,000 payment, which Dyster referred to, in an interview with the Buffalo News, as a "good will payment."

Good will for what, many wondered. Guido's lease was set to terminate on August 1 in any event, and Hamister certainly wouldn't begin actual construction prior to closing.

At the time, Guido's attorney, Kevin A. Szanyi, said that if the Hamister closing did not take place by September 30, the lease with his client goes back into effect.

"We want it to get off to a clean start, with good will among all parties," Dyster said of the quick timing.

Immediately, city crews were dispatched to the site to tear down a trailer Guido used to house a small restaurant, along with a nearby shed, and grade the lot – at taxpayer expense.

Hamister, who has never built a hotel before, originally painted a lavish picture of the "resort destination" he planned to build on the choice real estate, which lies about 300 feet from the main entrance to the Niagara Falls State Park.

A news release issued in 2013 described a 100,000-square-foot establishment with 100 plus upscale rooms and 24 trendy permanent apartments. On the ground floor, 8,000 feet would be devoted high end boutiques for the discerning shopper.

The project would create between 200 and 300 jobs during the construction phase, and catering to the needs of the mon-eyed patrons who would flock to the premier destination would require the services of 70 full time employees once construction was completed.

Of course, only one hotel chain could provide the necessary opulence to make this all come true, so Hamister announced that Hilton Hotels & Resorts had been brought on board to partner in the venture, lending



The site of the proposed Hamister hotel was a parking lot operated by John and Debbie Guido. Mayor Dyster paid them \$45,000 [state taxpayer money] to move out before the primary since he said Hamister was ready to go. Why did taxpayers foot the bill? Why couldn't the Guido's continue to operate the lot?



The New Niagara is very much like the old Niagara. When will Hamister who inked the deal to build a hotel in 2013 actually either admit he does not have the funding or start building his hotel?

the most prestigious name in worldwide hospitality to the venture.

The hotel project would be "transformational," a once in a lifetime opportunity that would provide the "tipping point" that would once and forever serve to revitalize the city's languishing tourist district, Dyster gushed.

But when Hamister finally had to submit papers to the county Industrial Development Authority to apply for millions in tax breaks, he admitted that there would be no upscale residential apartments, no trendy boutiques and that the hotel wouldn't be a Hilton at all, but a mid-scale, 128-room Hyatt Place – indistinguishable from those found near truck stops in Nebraska and Arkansas – instead.

Rather than 70 full time jobs, just six fulltime and about 39 part time jobs were listed on the developer's IDA application, which is sworn to under penalty of perjury.

Early estimates set the price tag of the project at \$22.4 million, a figure that has since ballooned to \$35.7 million despite the numerous downgrades in the scope of what was being built.

Under the terms of his agreement with the state, Hamister will receive \$1 in state aid for every \$9 he sinks into the project.

Hamister has been inflating the cost, perhaps to be able to get more taxpayer subsidy money.

Construction was originally slated to begin in the spring of 2014. It didn't, and the developer announced that it would get underway that summer. Summer came and went and a spring, 2015, groundbreaking was announced. A building permit was issued that summer, at the time of the payoff to Guido, but no groundbreaking took place.

Critics have charged that the actual cost of the hotel will be around \$18 million, since a nearly identical Hyatt Place was built in Amherst last year for that amount.

Just last week, Canadian hotel developer Michael DiCienzo reiterated his offer to take

over the Niagara Falls project and deliver the hotel for \$18 million.

Last year's payoff to Guido wasn't the first time the Dyster administration has acted quickly because construction of the hotel was said to be imminent. Back in the autumn of 2013, former city councilman Sam Fruscione was demonized in the press for simply asking whether or not Hamister actually had the money to do what he said he was going to do.

Fruscione was running for reelection and a campaign of robo-calls and mailings was launched against him by Dyster operatives calling him an obstructionist who was personally responsible for the lack of development in the city.

The voting public bought into it, and Fruscione went down to defeat.

Now nearly three years later, it looks like he was right. If Hamister had the money to begin construction, there is no reason whatsoever for him not to have.

Recently the mayor finally admitted as much.

"Along with developers, we're waiting to hear back on the completion of arrangements on financing," Dyster said. "We're all anxiously waiting to hear about the conclusion of this process."

How is it that Fruscione – along with former councilmen Bob Anderson and Glenn Choolokian, along with the entire editorial department of this newspaper – strongly suspected Hamister didn't have the money three years ago and Dyster, who remains closer to the developer than anyone in the city, seemed oblivious to the fact until just last week?

Why was \$45,000 in state taxpayer money squandered to pay off Guido, when there is no reason he couldn't still be operating on the property today?

And did this have anything to do with the fact that the payoff happened to be precisely during reelection time and by clearing Guido

off the lot and cleaning it up with taxpayer money, Dyster made it appear as if the Hamister deal was really going to happen.

In other words, Dyster used taxpayer money to assist his reelection, knowing full well that Hamister did not have the funding.



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Swami Vivekananda

Lack Of Communication Problem For City Council, Tompkins Says

Mike Hudson

Freshman City Councilman Kenny Tompkins says his first two months on the job have been something of an education. Coming from a long background in private business, he says the lack of communication between Council members has come as a bit of a surprise.

"I've been disappointed in a few things," he told the Niagara Falls Reporter. "Some of my colleagues are great, and some of them won't return a phone call."

Tompkins ran his campaign last year on the proposition that the city is a business, and should be run like one.

"I mean, you're talking about making decisions that will affect people's lives, about spending millions of dollars," Tompkins said. "Am I wrong to think it would be better to talk about it first?"

His family's history of doing business in the city spans nearly a century. His maternal grandparents opened Fratello Brothers grocery in 1916, while his father operated



Niagara Falls Council Member Kenny Tompkins hopes the city council will be more frugal with taxpayers' money.

C&I Roofing until his retirement in the 1990s. Tompkins' uncle Mel owned Thompson Home Improvement, while his other uncle, Bob, owned Saraceni Drug Store.

Today, his own brother Will carries on that family tradition as a co-owner of Pine Pharmacy in City Market, while other brother, Dan, owns Wheatfield Physical Therapy.

Growing up in such an environment, it was only natural that Tompkins would enter business himself. He works as operations manager at H.W. Bryk & Sons. In his work, he negotiates contracts, make purchases, and ensure that his working team is fully trained.

"I compare what I do to what is missing in our city: common business sense," he said. "As a purchaser, I see how easy it can be to spend money on things that look good at the moment. As a smart purchaser, I routinely analyze the future impact of each expenditure to ensure long-term feasibility."

Tompkins' main campaign promise, and his first piece of legislation as a Council member, was to end health care benefits for city councilmen, who serve part time. The measure passed, only to be struck down by veto from Mayor Paul Dyster.

"I can tell you that absolutely nobody on the Council saw that coming," he said. "Everyone was as shocked as I was."

To say it was a rude awakening would be an understatement. Dyster was roundly criticized in the local media, and by the public on numerous Niagara Falls Facebook forums, for killing the cost cutting measure.

Still, Tompkins said, he remains optimistic. He reiterated a theme he used throughout his campaign – that he is not a politician, has no self interest in serving on the Council, and isn't looking to spend the rest of his life at City Hall.

"When I was running, my only thought was the good of the city," he said. "It's still like that. I can tell you in all honesty that I haven't thought about running for a second term for one second."

This refreshing attitude is what sets Tompkins apart from the dealmakers and climbers who have personified City Hall in recent years.

"I'd like to see my kids stay here, but what would they be staying for?" he said. "I would like to see all of our children enjoy a vibrant future here. This city was built on blue-collar individuals choosing to live here; it's time we return to that mindset."

Solarcity Sings Financial Blues, While City Bought Highland Ave. Property Based On Solarcity Spinoff

The company at the center of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's "Buffalo Billion" initiative and the stated reason Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster and city Planner Tom DeSantis spent \$165,000 of taxpayers' money on a largely worthless piece of property on Highland Avenue is in serious financial difficulty, and analysts say that the long term prospects of SolarCity – the nation's largest producer of solar panels – are bleak.

The company's fourth quarter report, released earlier this month, showed a total loss of \$710 million for 2015.

SolarCity stock prices plummeted on the news, bottoming out at \$17.38 and as of press time was up slightly at \$18.90, down from a high of \$82 a share when Cuomo announced the "Buffalo Billion" initiative in 2014.

Analysts said freefalling oil prices due to a strong dollar and relative stability in the Middle East — combined with the fact that Solar City and other heavily subsidized companies like it were never forced to develop much of a business plan in the first place — are responsible for the sudden reversal.

"SolarCity, the nation's largest provider of rooftop systems, is but the most visible of a cluster of companies, built with the aid of government subsidies and utility incentives, now facing deep uncertainties, despite unflagging consumer interest and surging growth in renewable energy," the New York Times reported.

"Solar panels have been around for decades, but the businesses and methods



City taxpayers bought this property because, they were told, that the spin off from SolarCity would be so great that this property would become a hotbed of development. But SolarCity is facing serious financial challenges and are having problems getting their own project started.

that have propelled their fast spread across rooftops in the last five or six years are still new and untested. Many of the assumptions that underpin the financial models are far from certain, analysts and experts say, and as market conditions, public policies and technologies evolve, the risks are becoming more evident," the article concluded.

That's bad news for Cuomo.

In 2014, Cuomo took the extraordinary step of committing an historic \$1 billion investment in the Buffalo area economy that he said would create thousands of jobs and spur billions in new investment and economic activity over the next several years. This \$1 billion commitment to economic

excellence has the potential to set a new growth trajectory for jobs and the regional economy, Cuomo claimed.

The centerpiece of the initiative would be the SolarCity "GigaFactory" at Riverbend, a facility that, it was claimed, would employ 3,000 workers at a cost of \$750 million in state investment.

In a separate announcement last week, SolarCity officials said that, even though the plant will be ready to open this fall, production is being postponed until the summer of 2017.

Officials said the reason for the delay was longer-than-expected delivery times for manufacturing equipment. But Jim Heaney

of the website Investigative Post has openly speculated that finances are an issue in the delay.

In Niagara Falls, Dyster spent \$165,000 of taxpayers money for a 5.5 acre brownfield on Highland Avenue that had an assessed value of just \$75,000. The sole reason given for the purchase was the possibility of "spinoff" from the SolarCity project.

"With SolarCity coming online shortly, it will create a lot of demand for shovel-ready, industrial development sites," he said. "The real purpose here is to convert, to regenerate those lands, those acres of former industrial property into property that actually becomes performing."



Solar City prices have dropped dramatically in the past year. What is the future of this taxpayer subsidized company?

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A Bridge Over Troubled Water

Planned Dewatering Of American Falls May Not Be Tourism Friendly



The image (above left) captures perfectly the majesty and terror of the spectacular American Falls, while the photo (above right) — taken from the same vantage point — shows the falls during the dewatering of 1969. If you were a tourist, traveling hundreds or even thousands of miles to spend money on hotels, restaurants, tours and souvenirs, which sight would you want to see? Hospitality industry representatives in 1969 said business was off by as much as 40 percent during the dewatering.

Frank Parlato

Niagara Falls - There has been a lot reported in local media about a recent New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPR) proposal to dewater Niagara Falls.

“Dewatering is necessary for two reasons,” a report from NYSOPR says. “The existing 115-year old bridges need to be demolished. The river channel must be dewatered in order to demolish and remove [two] bridges.

“(And) the piers and abutments for the replacement bridges must be constructed ‘in the dry,’ to allow for safe construction procedures and to ensure that the new foundations are firmly anchored to bedrock.”

The first bridge links the City of Niagara Falls to Green Island and the second links Green to Goat Island. Both bridges span the rapids about 1000 feet from the brink of the American Falls. Both are currently pedestrian bridges -- although park vehicles occasionally utilize them and they are wide enough for single lane traffic.

Presently, the preferred Parks’ proposal

[out of three options] is to stop the flow of water going over the American Falls from September to April [2019-2020] while contractors build concrete archways that mimic the historic bridges installed in 1901 that were built as part of Frederick Law Olmsted’s master vision for the park. Perhaps the biggest change from old to new is that the new bridges will be designed wider so that it can accommodate two-way vehicular traffic.

The \$37 million plan would see engineers design a temporary dam — called a cofferdam — just upstream of the island, and the water would then be diverted down the Horseshoe Falls which flows mainly on the Canadian side.

Local officials are predicting that the dewatering will create a boost in tourism.

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster likened the plans for the dewatering to the attraction created by the historic 1912 tightrope crossing of daredevil Nik Wallenda. Assemblyman John Ceretto told the Lockport Union Sun & Journal he expects a tourism boom.

A preliminary report by the engineering firm Greenman Pedersen, selected to design the proposed plans, states, “Dewatering is expected initially (to) be a tourism draw (a

once in a lifetime opportunity to see the falls and river channel without water)”.

John Percy, CEO of the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation, told CNN that the dewatering is “an exciting — even an enormous — marketing opportunity for us.”

“[The dewatering of the American

Niagara Falls] will gain worldwide attention.”

State Parks spokesman Randy Simons called the prospect of a dry falls “a once-in-a-lifetime” event “because beyond fixing these bridges, there is no reason to dewater the falls.”

People came from all over the world to



This pedestrian footbridge was built in 1901 without dewatering the falls.

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see the falls turned off, said Michelle Kratts, who served as Niagara Falls city historian until this past December.

“It’s the nature of curiosity. You want to see what’s underneath, to see its skeleton,” Kratts told the Buffalo News.

In 1969, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers diverted water away from the American Falls to study erosion. Nothing was changed, after the International Joint Commission recommended that no remedial action should be done.

But, with the dewatered falls, it was found “what’s underneath” which was a pile of broken rocks, tangled tree trunks and at least two dead bodies, along with coins tossed in by tourists over the years. The coins were removed by the bucketful by park workers.

But, as for people from all over the world coming to see the dewatered falls, officials may want to examine the newspaper reports of 1969 which was the last [and only time] the falls was dewatered.

While newspaper accounts of 1969 reported that overall attendance was up at Niagara Falls State Park, officials were quoted as saying that a majority of the visitors weren’t tourists but day-tripping local curiosity seekers.

In a September 1969 article titled “Tourism 1969: It Wasn’t a Good Year,”

Niagara Falls Gazette writer Joe Donaldson wrote, “The visitors season, circa 1969, has gone amidst cries of anguish up and down tourist alley. Initially billed as a super year for tourist operators, the year of the big buck, the season fell flat on its face.

“At least that’s what people in the tourist business are saying, as they moan that business is off as much as 40 percent from last year.”

Another article, also from September 1969, said “Local tourism is suffering badly this summer because despite record numbers of people visiting the dewatered falls, tourist attraction and motel and hotel people say they aren’t staying and they aren’t spending money.”

Gazette writer Greg Mitchell described the 1969 tourist season: “Attendance on the reservation has been up all summer, thanks to the dewatering project, but the crowds have been made up predominantly of local people. Thus, the tourist trade (hotel, motel, restaurant, souvenir business) has not enjoyed a banner year – especially considering the year it feels it should be having with the once in a lifetime dry falls attraction.”

Mitchell quotes an unnamed state parks spokesman.

““Everybody expected it to be a big year – I guess it’s not,” the spokesman said. ‘We’ve

Much of the plan to dewater Niagara Falls is debatable:

- *Do the historic bridges need to be replaced with concrete replicas or could they be repaired?
- * Is dewatering necessary if the bridges are replaced? The bridges were built in 1901 without dewatering the falls.
- * What environmental risks are associated with the plan? it was reported that, for instance, trees along the shoreline died following the 1969 dewatering.
- * Is the real motive behind the plan to convert the two pedestrian bridges into vehicular bridges; the plan calls for making the new bridges wide enough for two-way traffic. Goat Island lost sizeable amounts of greenspace with the last “park improvement” plan. Making the island more traffic friendly may mean loss of greenspace to make additional parking lots. Delaware North operates concessions on Goat Island and their business is dependent on

how many people visit Goat Island. Park officials have not fully addressed the issue of whether the bridges will be open to tourists’ vehicles, despite the bridge being widened.

- * It is sometimes seen that business interests combined with consultants looking to earn fees sometimes drive government projects in a particular direction. With millions literally to be made by design engineers, plus the unique opportunity to boast of having engineered the dewatering of Niagara Falls, is this project driven by need or opportunity?
- * The chorus of officials declaring in unison that dewatering will create a tourist industry boom without any data to back up their claims is at least odd, and a cynical person might suspect the chorus was orchestrated; i.e. the project will sell better to the public if people believe it will be lucrative for the tourism industry.

gotten mostly local people, not additional tourists. The motels aren’t doing anything.”

In a nutshell, a headline from the August 28, 1969 edition of the Niagara Gazette, sums it all up: “Quiet Tourist Season in 1969 – Dry Falls Blamed for Decline”.

Currently, it is estimated that around eight million people come to Niagara Falls, N.Y., each year to see the falls. Most of those visits occur between May and September. The dewatering proposal plans for a restoration of the flow of water over the American Falls

prior to the beginning of the main tourist season which starts traditionally with a bang on Memorial Day weekend.

However, like any complicated construction project, this one may experience delays and work may extend into or through the short tourism season.

And, if history repeats itself, people will not come “from all over the world to see the falls turned off.” It’s more likely they’ll come from Grand Island or Cheektowaga.

In the end, the Canadian tourism industry may be the beneficiaries of the plan. According to an article in the Toronto Globe and Mail, “A plan that could see the American side of Niagara Falls go dry for a period of time to rebuild two bridges might be a boon to Canadian tourism.”

It seems simple: Water rushing over Niagara Falls equals tourism dollars. Divert all the water to the Canadian side and American tourism dollars may get diverted, as well.

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“Such was the will of the Father that his Son, blessed and glorious, whom he gave to us, and who was born for us, should by his own blood, sacrifice, and oblation, offer himself on the altar of the cross, not for himself, by whom “all things were made,” but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.”

St Francis of Assisi

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Happy late February everyone, winter is nearly over and spring, just like Ricky's,



is right around the corner. Been getting lots of positive feedback on our beer batter fish fry. Incredibly our fish fry has already been referred to as the best in town by our customers on social media. Our haddock is dipped in our unique house beer batter then it is fried to a mouthwatering golden brown perfection. We serve a side of fresh coleslaw,

choice of potato (crisp French fries or twice baked potato) and choice of salad (potato or macaroni salad) Our haddock is also offered baked & battered. We our offering our fish fry all day everyday through Easter.
For March we have a lot of exciting things lined up. Starting with our March madness 50 cent chicken wing special available to all of our dine-in costumers though the entire month of March. I am also pleased to say we have started karaoke on both Wednesday & Friday. We offer Thursday

open mic, we provide a full range of musical instruments including a house drum set that yours truly will occasionally beat on. Come down and show us what you got. For our Friday early birds 3pm to 5pm we are giving 25% off the purchase of the your 2nd entrée with the purchase of an entrée of equal price or greater. Don't forget to ask our servers about our new dessert menu. We are at 7710 Buffalo Ave Niagara Falls, NY our number is 716-283-7700 and we offer free delivery. Come to Ricky's "Where Good Times Roll "

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Jacobs Ends Speculation, Will Run For Senate Seat

Tony Farina

Erie County Clerk Chris Jacobs, a Republican and a member of the prominent Jacobs family which owns the Delaware North companies, has told political leaders he is going to run for the 60th District State Senate seat now occupied by Sen. Marc Panepinto, a Democrat.

“He told me he’s going to run,” said Erie County Conservative Party Chairman Ralph Lorigo this week, ending weeks of political speculation about whether Jacobs would take on Panepinto, a replay of his inner debate last year when he was considered the top GOP challenger to Democratic County Executive Mark Poloncarz only to disappoint party leaders by deciding not to run.

Jacobs could not be reached for comment on Tuesday, but his entry into the very important Senate race, which could decide which party controls the Senate next year, puts him on a primary collision course with Republican Kevin Stocker who finished second to Panepinto in a four-way race in 2014 with 30 percent of the vote after defeating incumbent Mark Grisanti in a primary. Stocker, from Tonawanda, has been going door-to-door for weeks, looking for support to take on Panepinto. Now he has Jacobs to deal with, too.

Panepinto won the seat with only



Chris Jacobs, presently Erie County Clerk, was formerly a private sector developer. His next role may be that of a state senator.

34 percent of the vote as besides Stocker, Grisanti received 28 percent on the Independent Party line and Conservative Tim Gallagher garnered eight percent of the vote in the district that has a strong Democratic enrollment edge but which supported Grisanti in 2012. As one political observer noted, it could be a rough re-election campaign for Panepinto with his low approval numbers from the 2014 run.

A Democratic primary also appears likely as Panepinto is facing a challenge from Amber Small, the executive director

of the Parkside Community Association, who has said that public corruption and economic fairness will be the key issues in her campaign.

The district includes the Town and City of Tonawanda, Grand Island, Buffalo, and stretches south to include Hamburg, Orchard Park, and Evans.

The State Teachers Unions backed Panepinto’s campaign with more than \$1.1 million in 2014 and are expected to be with him again as he bids for a second term. He could face a tough challenge from Small, a

29-year-old relative newcomer but who has made a name for herself with her community activism.

On the GOP side, State Republicans reportedly have been trying to line up money for a top candidate in the important race, including from powerful figures like former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Insiders speculate that Jacobs must have received assurances from the GOP leadership that they will support his campaign, including an expected costly primary fight with Stocker. And given his family connections, Jacobs is certainly seen as a candidate who can raise plenty of money on his own.

Political observers are forecasting a seven-figure race when all is said and done, given the potential, depending on the results of the Skelos seat special election April 19, for the 60th District to be the key race for control of the Senate.

Jacobs has been county clerk since 2011, and previously served as secretary of state and an at-large member of the Buffalo school board. He lost to Democrat Mark Coppola in 2006 in a special election for State Senate and he also lost a bid for election to the Erie County Legislature in 1995. Still, he proved a strong vote getter in 2014 when he won re-election as county clerk by a 2 to 1 margin.



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Special highlights this year will be a Comic-Con event, Awards Ceremony, Fallen Soldiers Event, celebrities and high-profilers attending and presenting, and more.

“Originality and a go-getters attitude is a must! If you think you got what it takes - give us a call,” says Bill Cowell, director of the film group.

Email Bill at bcowell@thebnff.com or call him at 716-693-0912.



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4:07 PM	Southern Tier Brewing @ 8580 Transit Rd. Amherst, NY

SATURDAY - FEBRUARY 27

12:03 PM	Southern Tier Brewing @ 1825 Como Park Blvd Lancaster, NY
1:04 PM	Genesee Brew House @ 2440 Clinton St. Cheektowaga, NY

Liberty Tax Offers Free Tax Preparation For Veterans, Active Military

Tony Farina

Much too often, the news we hear about veterans is not very good, from long lines at Veteran Administration hospitals to high unemployment figures for the men and women who have served our country when they return home.

But this story reminds us that there are many grateful people out there who want to help our veterans and our active duty men and women, and many of them actually step up and in their own way show their gratitude to those who are serving their country and or who have served in the military.

Beginning Monday, Feb. 29, and

continuing through Saturday, March 5, the folks at Liberty Tax Service, 6509 South Transit Rd., Lockport, will demonstrate their patriotism and salute veterans and active military with free tax preparation to mark "Military and Veterans Appreciation Week."

"We want to give something back to honor the men and women who bravely defend our freedom, our family and friends, and the American way of life," said Edwin Garey, owner of the Liberty Tax office in Lockport, in a statement. "We look forward to helping them prepare their taxes. Tax advice is always free regarding military service tax issues. Just call us and ask." The free week of tax preparation will be available at



Mike Gawel

participating Liberty Tax Service offices.

Michael Gawel, a tax accountant who works at the Lockport office and whose youngest son, Patrick, is an active duty

United States Marine, said he is proud to be able to help veterans and active duty military deal with Uncle Sam on tax matters. He said he is looking forward to helping them get the best return possible.

"I'm very proud of my son and all of the young men and women who are serving our country," said Gawel. "This special free preparation week is a way of showing just how appreciative we are for the sacrifices they make to protect our freedom."

Folks who are interested in having their returns prepared for free can call 866-871-1040 or visit <http://www.libertytax.com/> or libertytaxlockport.com for a list of Liberty Tax offices.

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

Chuck Shephard

CHANNELING GEORGE CARLIN

■ “Military Intelligence”: The head of U.S. Navy intelligence has for more than two years been prohibited from accessing classified information (as the Pentagon disclosed to The Washington Post in January). Vice Admiral Ted Branch came under investigation in 2013 in a corruption scandal involving a foreign defense contractor and various Navy personnel and might have been suspended from all duties—except that, given the political gridlock in Washington, no consensus candidate has emerged. No charges have been filed against Branch, but before he enters any room at the Pentagon, classified material must be stowed away.

RECURRING THEMES

■ New World Order: (1) Yet another woman gave birth to her own granddaughter in January. Tracey Thompson, 54, offered to be the surrogate mother for her fertility-challenged daughter, Kelley, and delivered a 6-pound, 11-ounce girl at The Medical Center in Plano, Texas. (2) After notable successes in the United States, Latin America claimed in December its first transgender pregnancy after Ecuadorean Fernando Machado announced he was expecting a child with his partner Diane Rodriguez. Fernando used to be “Maria”; Diane used to be “Luis”; and though both undergo hormone therapy, they

have retained their birth organs.

■ Overexcited police departments occasionally feel the need to safeguard towns by zealous enforcement of anti-gambling laws. In November, police in Altamonte Springs, Florida, raided the Escondido Community Clubhouse, formally shutting down the retirement village’s games of bingo, bunko, penny poker and—most controversially—the weekly sessions of the culturally venerated mahjong. Although none of the games is illegal under state law, advertising for-money games is, and the notices in the Heritage Florida Jewish News were such attention-getters that the pots for the games often grew to exceed the \$10 legal maximum. (Given mahjong’s sociological significance, news of the bust was even reported in Jerusalem’s Times of Israel.)

■ Perspective: On the heels of a similar program in Richmond, California, Washington, D.C.’s D.C. Council authorized funding in January to pay stipends to notorious criminals if they stop committing crimes. Police would identify up to 50 residents likely to violently offend again in 2016 and offer them periodic cash payments plus special training and educational benefits—as long as they stay out of trouble. Officials in Richmond (once overwhelmed by gun deaths) say their program, commenced almost 10 years ago, has produced a 76 percent drop in gun-related crime.

■ Reports of the prominence of animal urine

in various cultures’ health regimens have surfaced periodically in News of the Weird, and in December, in Al Qunfudhah, Saudi Arabia, a shop selling camel urine (with a long history of alleged medicinal qualities) was closed by authorities after they found 70 camel-urine bottles actually filled with shopkeeper-urine.

■ About a decade ago, several fast-food restaurants (especially during evening shifts staffed by sometimes inadequately trained managers) were plagued by a prank phone-caller, posing as law enforcement requesting investigative help, asking managers to strip-search employees for “contraband” and to describe the searches in real time to the caller. (A suspect was arrested, and the calls stopped.) Managerial judgment was also on display at a Morro Bay, California, Burger King in January when a prank caller somehow convinced BK employees to begin shattering the store’s windows because of a purported “gas leak.” Several windows were smashed in, and an investigation of the call is ongoing.

■ Awkward: In January, Israeli television journalist Eitam Lachover became the latest to be injured in a high-profile test of a “protective” vest when he volunteered to be stabbed on camera for a news segment. Vest company officials’ faces turned quickly sour as the blade penetrated the vest (though the wound was described as “light”).

■ In January, 15-year-old Anthony Ruelas, trying to rescue a classmate gasping from

an asthma attack, became the latest casualty in public schools’ relentless insistence on “zero tolerance” of any deviation from rules. Gateway Middle School in Killeen, Texas, suspended Ruelas for two days for what others called his “heroic” assistance in gathering the girl in his arms and taking her to the nurse’s office—while the teacher, following “procedure,” waited passively for a nurse to email instructions. (Ruelas had defied the teacher, declaring, “(F-word) that—we ain’t got time to wait for no email from the nurse.”) The school district’s superintendent later cited a federal law that he interpreted as justifying the procedure.

■ Age-Old Prank Fails: Will Lombardi, 19, was charged with arson in Northampton, Massachusetts, in January after he acknowledged that “probably” he was the one who left a flaming box of excrement on the front porch of the family with whose daughter he was feuding. The fire was supposed to alarm the victim, who would try to stomp it out, thus spreading the feces and soiling the stomper’s shoes. In this case, however, the fire had spread a bit. (Bonus: Lombardi’s box selection was a used mailer with Lombardi’s name and address still readable.)

■ Undignified Death: A 47-year-old man in Saint-Marcel, Italy, fell to his death in January as he leaned over a balcony railing to shake crumbs off his tablecloth after breakfast. The tablecloth reportedly slipped from his hands, leading him to (unsuccessfully) reach for it.

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Local 91 Laborer 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.

City Hall Jokes



Answer: Down a \$350,000 rat hole.
Question: Where did the money for the "train station re-bid" go?



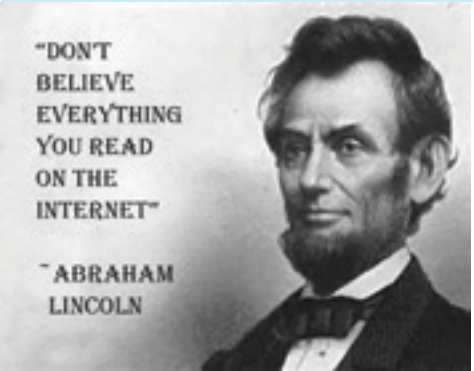
Paul Dyster and George Maziarz walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and shouts, "You sleazy politician, I thought they finally caught up to you, get out! Senator Maziarz, you can stay."



Confucius say: When angry residents speak their mind at council meeting, council chairman run for cover like old woman caught in sudden storm.



What will happen first?
A) Hamister will build his hotel
B) Hell will freeze over
B) Paul Dyster will be transparent
D) None of the above



Political dictionary
Dyster Parking Plan: an unconscionably costly document calling for even more unconscionable administrative costs balanced on the breathtakingly disingenuous premise that parking meters are needed to hold down costs.



Answer: As nervous as long tailed cats in a room full of rocking chairs.
Question: How would you describe Dyster's department heads as they await the mayor's final word on who stays and who goes at city hall?



A thought bubble above Charles Walker's head:
"As long as the city's finances are a mess no one will notice that I'm still violating election law by refusing to file campaign finance reports."



Those city hall staff meetings must be a lot wilder than we thought. Mayor Dyster boasted on the Darro show that he's been trained to treat heroin overdoses with Narcan.

Your Weekly Horoscope

By Jean Topascani



A trained astrologer can tell someone's sign by just looking at them. Yes, each sign has its own unique physical characteristics. Learn how to make the most of your own astrologically - given looks and be able to tell at a glance what sign someone is by using the handy chart below...

 <p>Aries: (March 21 - April 19)</p> <p>As personable as a wet roll of toilet paper. Shave your head, paint yourself green, get on your spaceship and fly back to your home planet. People would ask you who you slept with, if only they could believe any-one slept with you at all? You make people think of a girl/guy from the trailer park who is kind of hot at first, but when you look closer, he/she's kind of not. You have a "punch me" face!</p>	 <p>Cancer: (June 21 - July 22)</p> <p>Franken-face! This is what happens when you visit a plastic surgeon more often than you visit the dentist. Sorry, but skunk hair never looks good on anyone! Neither does your catfish face, Jay Leno chin, pigeon toes and vacant stare. You are unattractive even to horseflies.</p>	 <p>Libra: (September 23 - October 22)</p> <p>While you are sinisterly unattractive with a nose similar to that of a toucan, make-up and butt pads will do wonders for you. You could be the main attraction at a freak show. But remember, just because you can walk backwards doesn't make you a genius.</p>	 <p>Capricorn: (December 22 - January 19)</p> <p>While you don't believe you have the face of a horse, how is it that people keep holding sugar cubes in front of you? You look like a burnt raisin on crack. It should be against the law for anyone to be so ugly.</p>
 <p>Taurus: (April 20 - May 20)</p> <p>The qualifier of the common word, "ugly," "butt-ugly," entered the dictionary thanks to you! Get lots of plastic surgery and pretentious, stupid tattoos. Botox your forehead. Forget about dieting. Face, ears, ALL need to be hatcheted off your body before anyone will care whether you are skinny or fat.</p>	 <p>Leo: (July 23 - August 22)</p> <p>Your hairline touches your eyebrows. Pancake head, weird nose, pale, wrinkled face, ugly eyes, too much eyeliner, too thin, no boobs, no butt, no nothing. Hair, plain and weak. Strange out-of-proportion body, duck lips. Yes, you know you're hot!</p>	 <p>Scorpio: (October 23 - November 21)</p> <p>Lots and lots and lots and lots and lots of very large horse teeth! Neigh! Your pointed nose is big-ger than Mount Everest! You are quite ugly! But you were even uglier when younger. That is putting it ten-derly. Get liposuction or something.</p>	 <p>Aquarius: (January 20 - February 18)</p> <p>You have access to every makeup trick and plastic surgery gimmick on the planet and are still uglier than a plumber's moon. You have a smile like the Joker, nostrils like Falcor, an anorexic body and are fish lipped. Worst of all, you have a skanky, narcissistic personality. Children are frightened at the very sight of you.</p>
 <p>Gemini: (May 21 - June 20)</p> <p>Onion head with mouse ears, saggy jowls, droopy eyes, a pug nose, nasty sloppy lips, buck teeth, rat's nest hair, chubby chipmunk cheeks, fat thunder thighs, hook nosed, wrinkly lizard skin hanging on an uneven awkward frame. Someone crossbred a drag queen and a mule and got you. Yeah, baby! You belong in Hol-lywood.</p>	 <p>Virgo: (August 23 - September 22)</p> <p>Skeletor called, he wants his face back. Lips like two pieces of soggy liver, large cheekbones, crooked eye-brows, warped nose, HUGE chin and gums that look like they are going to jump out of your mouth and at-tack someone every time you smile. Be proud of your heritage. Let your slick, black oily hair shine and your nose grow. Think sexy, baby!</p>	 <p>Sagittarius: (November 22 - December 21)</p> <p>Pasty, pale vampire skin, huge protruding nose, wrinkles surrounding your mouth, ugly outdated 1960s haircut, thin eyebrows drooping over creepy alien eyes, thunder thighs and cankles, horse face, yuk. Someone please kill this thing with fire. One theory is that Photoshop was created just to lessen your "fright factor."</p>	 <p>Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)</p> <p>Surgery, hair dying, straightening, waxing, tanning, diets, and workouts results in NO sex appeal whatsoever. You look like a cross between a drag queen and a horseball. In the dictionary under your picture is a new word, "vomitrocious," which has been invented because of you. Please leave Justin Bieber alone, he didn't do anything to you!</p>

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Country LX
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2010 Dodge Ram sport 4x4
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navigation.
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navigation, low miles.
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navigation.
\$16,977



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E-250
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2011 gmc slt crew 4x4
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navigation.
\$23,797



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8997 4x4
\$8,997



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Silverado 2500 HD 4x4
crew cab LT.
\$18,977



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roof, navigation.
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