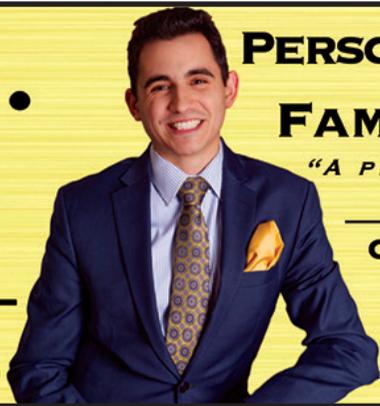


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READY FOR A REASSESSMENT?

Land Value Tax - The Devil is in the Details

By: Frank Parlato
Analysis

Seth Piccirillo, who is running for mayor in the Democratic Party primary, wants to switch the way the City of Niagara Falls taxes property, if he is elected.

The way taxes work now in this city [and every other city in the USA] is that real estate, which consists of both buildings and homes [structures] and land, are taxed based on their value.

Land is taxed based on assessed value and structures on the land are also taxed at assessed value.

This combined tax - on land and structures-based on assessed value - is supposed to tax property based on what the property is worth.

A property with a higher market value is supposed to pay a higher tax than a property that is worth less.

Seth wants to change that.

He wants to tax only land. Raise the taxes on



the land and eliminate taxes on the structures built on the land.

It is not being done anywhere in the

(Cont. on pg. 2)

Farina Selected for Broadcasters Hall of Fame Class of 2019

By: Nicholas D. D'Angelo

As the publisher and editor-in-chief of The Niagara Reporter, I would like to extend my congratulations to Tony Farina, one of our longtime contributing writers who was honored last week as one of six new inductees into the Buffalo Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame.

Farina was elected to the Hall of Fame in the television category for his long and award-winning career as an investigative reporter for both WGRZ-TV and WKBW-TV during which he broke many major stories including the arrest of a suspect in the famous .22 caliber

(Cont. on pg. 3)

Police Captain Remembers Pain of Steingasser Case

By: Tony Farina

I ran into retired North Tonawanda detective chief Gabriel DiBernardo a couple of years ago, before the arrest of a suspect last year in the 1993 murder of 17-year-old Mandy Steingasser whose broken and battered body was found in Bond Lake Park in Lewiston five weeks after she disappeared.

"That case still haunts me," DiBernardo told me as we chatted about the teenager's

(Cont. on pg. 3)

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THE CRIME PAGE 4

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NIAGARA FALLS

Piccirillo Proposes Land Value Tax Experiment; Which Is a Tax Reassessment (Cont. from cover)

USA. But it has been tried in the past, mostly unsuccessfully it seems.

Seth's idea - that taxes be paid on land only - is called Land Value Tax or LVT.

His idea, if implemented, would be, in effect, a reassessment and, like all reassessments, some will end up paying more and some will pay less in property taxes.

Big Buildings Will Get Tax Break

With a Land Value Tax, the winners would be rich people who own big buildings, high rises or mansions on comparatively smaller lots. For example, the Hamister hotel in Niagara Falls is on a lot not much bigger than the footprint of the hotel. If Seth's LVT plan were to pass [it needs state legislative approval, as well as council approval], the Hamister hotel will pay taxes only on the smallish lot and not on the five-story hotel that sits on the lot.

The Hamister Hotel would have lower taxes than a smaller [and less valuable] hotel with more land. That's because, with Seth's plan, only the land is taxed.

Another example would be someone who bought a vacant lot next to their home. They will pay much higher taxes under LVT. The vacant lot is perhaps not worth much, maybe a few hundred dollars, and presently taxes are negligible - maybe \$100 per year.

With LVT, the adjacent lot would be taxed the same as if it had a home on it [Remember only the land is taxed - no tax is added for the home or building on it].

A mansion with a small lot will pay less taxes than a nearby shanty with a larger lot. [Only the land is taxed, not the mansion or the shanty.]

With LVT, vacant land [and all land] is necessarily assessed at a high tax rate to make up for the fact that buildings are not taxed at all.

It Was Tried in Altoona

Altoona PA. tried it. Altoona has a population that is about the same as Niagara Falls - some 45,000. Altoona was the only municipality in the country that taxed property based solely on the value of land.

Altoona started LVT in 2011. It resulted in much, much higher taxes on vacant land. And Altoona ended the experiment five years later.

The mayor and council of Altoona thought that taxing only the land - at a high rate - and no tax on structures - would encourage owners of vacant land to build on their properties, or sell their parcels to those who would. Since the tax on vacant land would be the same as the tax after they built a hotel or apartment building, why wouldn't it work?

It was portrayed as a way to boost a struggling city, a way to force developers to build on vacant land.

The idea was that, by eliminating taxes on buildings, the land value tax system would spur construction and increase density in the downtown area. Some projects that would otherwise not be developed would be feasible when there was no added tax after the developer built on the land.

It didn't work. In 2016, Altoona went back to the old way - a tax on land and structures based on assessed values.

The mayor of Altoona said, in effect, that there was no impact on development from LVT.

It was supposed to discourage landowners from holding vacant land, because it imposed a high tax whether or not one developed the land. It worked the opposite. It scared off potential business development in Altoona, said Mayor Matt Pacifico.

Developers did not come to town to buy land - because land was taxed so high.

It discouraged purchase of vacant lots that resulted from demolition of blight, because neighbors who might otherwise buy those lots for side yard beautification hesitated, because of the high taxes they'd owe, said Councilman Matt Cacciotti.

Failures in Pittsburgh and Allentown

Pittsburgh also tried a variation of the LVT [It was not pure LVT, as Seth proposes. Pittsburgh taxed land high and structures at a low tax]. This led to a drastic increase in assessed land values and the

system was abandoned in favor of the traditional property tax in 2001.

Allentown PA. also had a variation of LTV. They wound up having to raise taxes by 27 percent for 2019.

Abandonment of Land Reduces Tax Base

The problem with LVT is, when land is taxed too high, abandonment follows. Less people pay taxes. Then taxes must go up for those who remain. And because land is taxed so high, land values go down, not up.

Seth's View

While in Altoona, nobody wanted to develop and the expected new business never happened. And five years later, there were no clear examples of projects or investments made because of the land tax system. But Seth sees it the opposite:

He says the city's present "two-tiered tax system [taxing land and structures] punishes small businesses. Meanwhile, land speculators comfortably occupy acres of vacant land that could be used for development. The solution ... is ... a Land Value Tax.

"While traditional property taxes increase as the value of the buildings on a piece of land increase, land value taxes are based solely on an appraisal of the land's value. Land... should be taxed ... regardless of what buildings occupy that land."

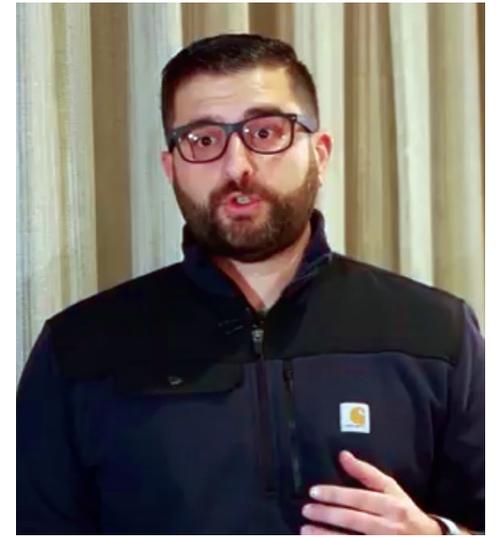
Reassessment

In the end, LVT means, of course, tax reassessment. That often means higher taxes for people overall. It may also mean abandonment of vacant land by owners who presently maintain it and pay taxes on it. These will likely revert to the city.

LVT shifts from people paying property taxes based on market value to where everyone, rich and poor, pay based on land only.

Land is cheap in Niagara Falls, for there is little demand. So the taxes - to pay for an expensive city government - will have to be hiked - on land enormously.

It will create inequities and, if Altoona is any example, it likely will spur little or



Mayoral Candidate Seth Piccirillo seeks to implement a land value tax system which would bring about the largest reassessment Niagara Falls has ever seen.

no development.

But maybe Seth knows something the rest of us - including the rest of the country - does not.

One thing is sure, at the end of the day, LVT will increase taxes for some - both rich and poor - and reduce it for others - also both rich and poor.

Large building owners will likely gain the most.

Homeowners with larger than average lots will likely be hit the hardest.

And no one knows for certain who will gain and who will lose.

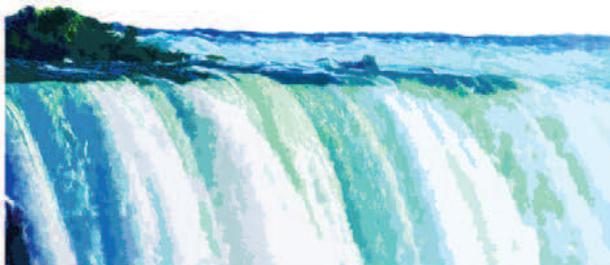
Seth is proposing - under the name of Land Value Tax - a tax reassessment - and since taxes pay for it - the LVT is likely to raise taxes - in order to pay for bloated Niagara Falls government.

Today, every city in the United States has property tax on both land and structures on the land, including Niagara Falls.

And Seth wants to change that.

His idea that high taxes on vacant land [and no taxes on buildings] will make people want to develop in Niagara Falls. It may have the opposite effect.

NIAGARA



REPORTER

Frank Parlato, Jr.

Publisher & Editor in Chief

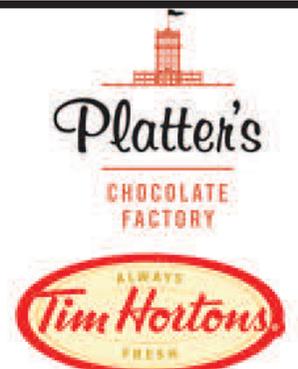
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Wilson: Lakeside Market

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

Air Force-1 Sergeant Elder Flying High with 2,600 Signatures

Ken Hamilton

As previously written, USAF Sergeant Jeffrey Elder is one giant step closer to being on November's ballot to run for the mayorship of the city of Niagara Falls, NY.

In fact, reports are that Elder turned in his petition package just before noon on Wednesday with more than five-times the 500-number of signatures necessary for him to be placed on the bottom line of the ballot for the General Elections in November, a ballot of which only mayoral candidate Seth Piccirillo can be denied IF he loses his Democratic primary to Democrat opponent Robert Restaino. But even if Restaino loses the Democratic primary race, he is still on two minor party lines and can pull votes from both a winning Piccirillo and an ersatz Republican opponent Glenn Choolokian.

You see, by the voting dynamics of Niagarans, "his momentous feat" of turning in so many signatures keeps Sgt. Elder's election at the beginning of a very long runway with his engines fully spooled for take-off, but "his actual feet" are still firmly planted on the ground.

This, because Elder is a black candidate – following in recent history of the efforts of former Niagara County Legislator Renae Kimble, mailman and restaurateur Norton Douglas and now-Florida school teacher Carnell Burch, Elder is the 4th such serious black candidate for mayor.

Even though Niagara Falls' black population is resoundingly Democratic, indications are that they are resoundingly resolved to voting for other black Democrats. With nearly 25% of the population of the city being black, if most black voters go to the polls in November to select a new mayor, it could mean that more than half would either vote for the independent Democrat Elder instead of the major party



Mayoral Candidate Jeffrey Elder.

candidates, giving Republican Choolokian a real push towards Room 125 at City Hall. A significant amount of others could easily stay home and not vote at all, furthering a pull away from either a victorious Piccirillo or Restaino.

Nonetheless, with the estimated nearly \$4000 that Elder spent on petitioning, he would still need massive more amounts of funding to fuel the engines of his campaign to get it off the ground and flying. As the only veteran running – as were the more recent successfully-run campaigns of mayors Michael O'Laughlin – USAF, James Gailie – USMC and Vince Anello – USMC, perhaps one day there could actually be up "into the wild, blue yonder" a "Sergeant-Mayor" Jeffrey Elder "flying high into the sky."

Though doubtful, his campaign does show a future potential.

Steingasser Cont.

disappearance and death, at the time a still unsolved murder even though police had a prime suspect from early on, the last person to be seen with her before she disappeared.

I had covered the girl's disappearance while I was working as an investigative reporter at Ch. 7 and had gotten to know DiBernardo and felt his frustration at being unable to make an arrest in a case where he knew the victim and her family.

About a year after that chance meeting with the retired detective, new Niagara County District Attorney Caroline Wojtaszek announced a one-count indictment charging Joseph Belstadt, 46, with second-degree murder in the death of his North Tonawanda High School classmate.

Wojtaszek said at the time, "this case was always a strong circumstantial evidence case. We now have new forensic evidence tying the defendant to the case."

DiBernardo told Dan Herbeck of the Buffalo News after the indictment was announced in April of 2018 that "for years I prayed for this. Every night, I would pray for my own two daughters and then say a prayer for Mandy. I knew this beautiful little girl. I knew her family. Her father (now deceased) was my friend for 50 years."

Belstadt has denied he killed his classmate, but now he faces a scheduled murder trial beginning Sept. 16 and his defense team, led by Michele Bergevin, is challenging the government's case on several legal issues, including seeking the transcripts of the grand jury proceedings now, not on the eve of trial, as is permissible under new state law. That request is under review by Judge Sara Sheldon.

Sheldon has asked attorneys in the case not to make comments to the media although there is no formal gag



Mandy Steingasser.

order in place. It remains a case of extreme public interest and as in most cold cases, there is no easy path to conviction for Wojtaszek. She has put an emphasis on cold cases as district attorney.

It is legitimate to wonder, given the strong circumstantial case the government has previously discussed, why it took so long to bring a formal indictment against the suspect who has admitted he had Steingasser in his car before she disappeared and was never seen alive again. The defense will likely attempt to discredit the new forensic evidence the government will likely present during the upcoming trial.

As the legal wrangling goes on and Belstadt remains free on bail, one can only imagine what would be going on in the mind of the victim's late father, Richard, who said before his death, "I try not to think about it. I know we're never going to get her back. You got to get on with your life."

But he added in that same interview with the Buffalo News: "I try to keep it out of my mind, but there are 20 things that happen every day to remind me of her. The memories keep coming back."

For the late father who lost a daughter, for the police captain who pursued the case, and for all those friends of the teenage girl who lost a friend and a classmate, the tragedy of it all lives on.

Farina Cont.

murder case in January of 1981.

"I had recently joined Ch. 2 as the "Newsbreaker" when I got a tip that Buffalo police were about to travel to Fort Benning, Ga., to talk to a soldier from Buffalo who had attacked a black soldier in his company with a knife," Farina said. "I called the station after confirming the tip and was able to go live at 5 and 6 with the story leading to the arrest of Joseph Christopher in the murder a up to 12 black men in a series of killings that had shocked Western New York and even New York City."

It was the first of many exclusives for the Lockport native who attended DeSales Catholic High School and later served four years as a journalist in the U. S. Navy.

Farina began his professional career after his military service at the Lockport Union Sun and Journal, and later worked at the Tonawanda News and the former Buffalo Courier-Express where he became the chief investigative writer/editor before transitioning to television after writing 18 copyrighted stories in his last year at the Courier.

"I had a terrific career at the Courier, working every job in the editorial department before becoming an assistant city editor and then the investigative reporter," said Farina. "I still think of those days and the people I worked with during that time, many of whom are no longer around. In many ways, I even preferred it to television because as a newspaper

reporter you were more in control. Just get the story and write it. In television, you not only had to get the story but shoot it, write it, and produce it on film. But I had wonderful help with photographers at both stations where I worked."

Farina won a New York State UPI first place award for investigative reporting at Ch. 2 for a series on Buffalo's waterfront. He also won a journalism society award for a series on Surrogate Court at Ch. 2 and won a major national award at Ch. 7 for a series on unsafe buses. It was one of five national first place awards (Eastern Region) for investigative reporting by the Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA).

"I had wonderful contacts and worked the streets tirelessly to find stories," says Farina, "and all of it was before cellphones. I always carried a pocketful of change to make a call back to the station to let them know I had something if I was out without a photographer. I wore out a lot of shoe leather, that's for sure."

Farina has broken a lot of stories for this newspaper as well, even though it is a weekly and much tougher to get a scoop. Yet he has done so time and again and continues to write something just about every week for the Niagara Reporter.

As for the Hall of Fame, Farina says he is deeply honored and appreciative, especially for his family, for the recognition he received after all these years. He left television news in 1998 to become the chief speechwriter for then-New York



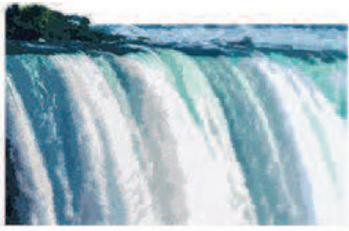
Current Niagara Reporter journalist Tony Farina

State Atty. Gen. Dennis Vacco.

The Broadcasters Hall of Fame Class of 2019 includes, besides Farina: John Murphy (radio voice of the Bills); Jim Toellner (management, GM, Ch. 2); Don Tomasulo (longtime radio advertising salesman); Sherry Margolis (former

Ch. 7 anchor now in Detroit); and the late WGR-AM program director Larry Anderson.

The induction ceremony will be held Sept. 19 at WNED-TV in Buffalo. Congratulations to all of the members of the Class of 2019.



THE CRIME

WEEKLY HEADLINES

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 2200 block of Ontario Avenue in the evening hours of Tuesday, May 28th, 2019, for a female who was allegedly armed with a knife. According to reports, no one was injured.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to 17th and Whitney Avenue in the late afternoon hours of Wednesday, May 29th, for reports of a shooting. According to reports, a man appeared at Memorial Hospital saying he was shot. He sustained one gunshot to the upper left arm. Once police were called, they immediately noticed a vehicle parked in the ambulance bay with multiple bullet holes throughout it. Bullet casings were retrieved from the scene of the shooting at 17th and Whitney Ave.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Beech Avenue in the afternoon hours of Thursday, May 30th, 2019, after receiving a 911 call from a 19-year-old female who told police that her "mom was being mean to her."

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Depot Avenue in the early morning hours of Friday, May 31st, 2019, after receiving reports of an armed robbery. According to police, a cab driver was threatened by an individual to turn over money. The suspect had a gun and threatened to harm the cab driver.

-The Niagara County District Attorney's Office announced on Friday, May 31st, 2019, the arraignment of William James Coleman, 28 of Niagara Falls, and Jonathan Lee McEnnis 34 of Buffalo, who were charged with two counts of murder in the second degree, three counts of robbery in the first degree, and two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree. Both defendants were remanded and will not be released before their trial which is scheduled for November, 2019. The defendants are accused of committing an armed robbery of The Bridgeway Market convenience store at 1104 Niagara Street and fatally shooting Ahmad Alsaid (also known as "Poppy"). Both defendants were on parole at the time of the robbery.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 400 block of 17th Street in the late hours of Sunday, June 2nd, 2019, after receiving reports of shots fired. According to police, a vehicle and house were hit with multiple bullets. No injuries were reported.

Mount Carmel RC Church & the Secret Society of Elders



Ken Hamilton

I suppose that it all started back with a somewhat heated telephone conversation between my friend, Niagara County Legislator and former Chief of Inspections & Code Enforcement, the Mount Carmelite Dennis Virtuoso and me.

When in his frustration of not being able to pigeonhole me into a definite political dogma, he then blurted out, "You know something Kenny! You're nothing but an ultra-conservative liberal." We then both paused for a few moments to digest his rather unconventional political diagnosis; and then, as if on cue, we both began to laugh – because he was the first person to exactly ID me as to what my political views really were and are. But I asked him in that conversation who's responsible for the political organizing of the city's African-American community. My hope was that he would have said that it was the responsibility of the then-highest ranking politically elected person in the county, his colleague the seemingly highly combative and often politically selfish Renae Kimble.

But Dennis didn't say that. Instead, he said that it was the responsibility of the African-American pastors, stating that it was so because they were our leaders. At that time there were nearly 40 of them.

It was true that black pastors, like ML King, Abernathy, Jackson and Sharpton had taken on the traditional mantle of being the spokespersons for the community; but that traditional role was back when blacks were largely denied an effective education. But Dennis' belief didn't stand muster because Kimble had a JD law degree from the University of Buffalo, which exceeded the education of any black pastor in the city, and the only political organization that she had was seemingly vested only in her own self-interests. To be fair, Dennis was comparing his priests with our black pastors, all of which the former, he pointed out, had bachelors degrees, most with masters and even some who had doctorates, as Kimble had. But at that time, any if not most of the black pastors didn't have a legitimate degree, and many of them never finished high school. I knew of both the former and the latter, and I therefore asked him why it was that his [Catholic] priests didn't actively participate in politics, but most of the elected local government officials

were Catholic.

Back to Dennis in a moment.

Several people have asked me about what they coin as a "Secret Society of Elders." Now, before your mind goes too far afield and think that the society is a Catholic organization, it is not – even though Niagara County Legislature reelection candidate Virtuoso, and all 3 of the major party candidates for Niagara Falls mayor -- Republican Glenn Choolokian, Director of Community Development and Code Enforcement Seth Piccirillo, and the Board of Education member Robert Restaino -- all attend the same Mount Carmel congregation. Their pastor, Father Klizek, has affirmed that he has no particular interest in politics, he's only interest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But I did look into the matter of the coined mostly black Society that apparently consist of mostly black pastors, along with non-pastoral names like retired city councilman Charles Walker, former Niagara Falls Housing Authority executive director Stephanie Cowart, and political operative Ronald Cunningham, whom I questioned a few weeks ago at the local Office Depot.

Cunningham had always been an easy read; nervously denying that such a group exists, but moments after his initial denial and quick walk away, he then spun on his heels and immediately returned to give me a statement that they were just a group of people who'd meet from time to time to discuss "... what we can do for the community." His veiled statement was like the cellophane wrapper on a package of cigarettes – protective of the product, but it didn't hide the brand label or the Surgeon General's Warning on the package's side. It is also clear that from leaked reports the "group that meets to see what they can do for the community" fully supports the candidacy of Robert Restaino; but special note should be made that the society is not a part of the Niagara Ministerial Council, a group that Reverend Glenn Raybon, the deceased last Dean of Niagara Falls' Black Pastors, said was started at the suggestion of deceased Mayor Michael O'Laughlin to reduce his interface with pastors seeking political favors from him. I have no idea with whom the mostly-black Ministerial Council will support, if anyone; but I am sure that after the primaries, both groups may want to interview someone not in that what might mistakenly be called the namesake Society of Elders, and that is the dark horse mayoral candidate USAF retiree, the African-American, Sergeant Jeffrey Elder.

And that takes us back to Dennis Virtuoso's priest at Mount Carmel and his priest's colleagues. Would the African-American community be better off if our pastors were more like Catholic priests; whereas they all became highly educated, shy away from politics and have a prosperous church filled of educated members who are seeking to become elected government officials competing with each other to see which can do the best job for their community – errr, I mean, all of our communities?

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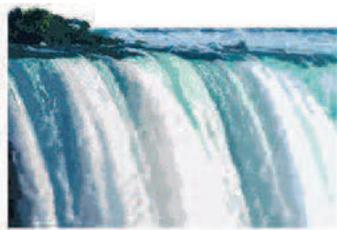


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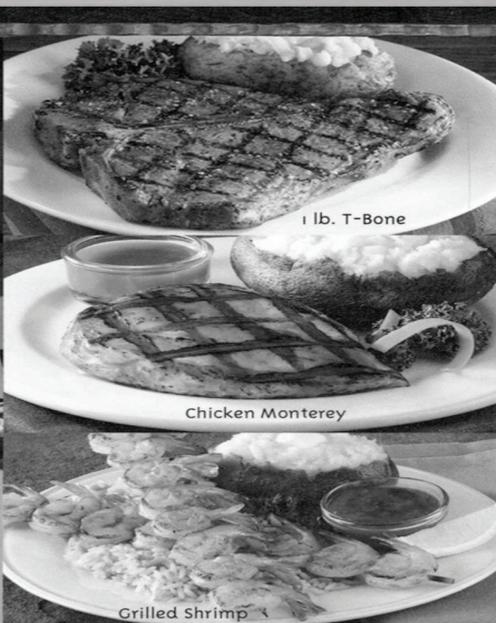
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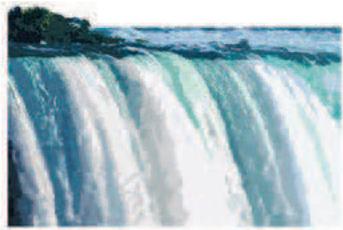
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NORTH TONAWANDA

Project Pride Beautifying NT

Brendan McDonough

A lot more color is coming to Webster and Oliver Street in North Tonawanda thanks to volunteers from Project Pride filling planters with bouquets of flowers.

“This is one of those things that is not necessarily a function of the City but it is something that the City has become used to and it makes the whole downtown look even nicer,” said Rich Andres, 8th District Legislator.

Despite being the third year they have done this, it is the first year they are planting at the Carnegie Arts Center. The money for the flowers comes from a number of fundraising events the group has all year long. For many it is a chance to make the area look better and help spread some neighborhood pride.

“It adds to a sense of community,” said Bob Brennan, North Tonawanda resident. “It makes the store fronts look better and just gives you and overall good feeling, knowing that you helped to make

the area look better.”

A special committee was set up to help pick the plants that will go in the boxes. Somewhere between fifteen and eighteen plants are put in each box and about fifty planters are spread out across the City. They include plants of all shapes and sizes and heights. Specifically, hand-picked so that they would not only help to make the area look nicer but be hearty enough for the ever-changing weather conditions.

“We are looking for plants that have color, curb appeal and certainly sustainability in these planters, for watering and sunlight, so a lot goes into deciding what goes into the planters,” said Barb Hughes, President of Project Pride.

In addition to purchasing plants the group is also working with the North Tonawanda Botanical Gardens taking a plant from a seedling and putting it on display for everyone across North Tonawanda to enjoy. Jay Robinson was one of the volunteers who came out this past weekend. He is a former dairy farm-



er and while he admits no farming skills were used, he hopes his hard work will pay off.

“I feel great that I am beautifying North Tonawanda,” said Robinson. “We need to keep it up. It is a nice little area and I hope that we can bring some people from the outside here and show them what we have.”

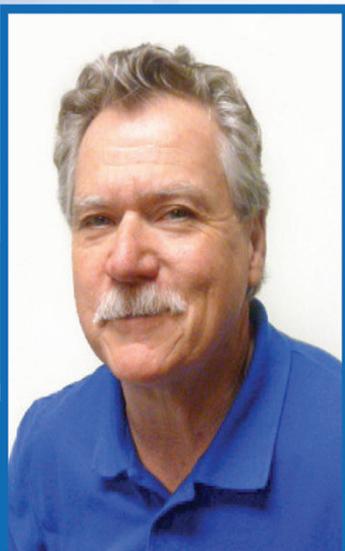
Volunteers hope that when people see the plants they will also stop in the local shops and help boost the local economy. It’s just one small step that Project Pride hopes will not only help to make the area look better but improve life for everyone. One plant at a time.

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Taste of the Tonawandas



Brendan McDonough

The rain couldn't dampen the spirits of people this past weekend at the annual 'Taste of the Tonawandas' where more than twenty-two vendors gathered at Gateway Harbor Park. Organizers have been holding the event for the past fourteen years.

This year, over sixty different food items were served up. It's a smaller event and organizers says they like to keep it that way. They are not Buffalo and say they do not try and be.

"We are a not-for-profit so we are not here to make money," said Linda Foels, President of Tonawanda's Gateway Harbor, Inc.. "If we break even that is a good day."

Music that caught the ears of visitors were also on the menu. Served up was everything from chicken and waffles to wine slushies. For many, it's a fun day to enjoy the food and friendship of people in the neighborhood.

"I have lived in this area since 1965 and the food is always delicious," said Judy Morris, Tonawanda Resident. "I always have a great time every year."

Three more vendors were added this year and organizers are hoping even more will be added next year. It is one of the largest events across the area sometimes bringing in as many as two thousand people to the Tonawanda's. For many coming here is an annual tradition.

"This is something great to do," Fay Valardo, Grand Island Resident. "There is always great food and we come every year to try all the different kinds of food; especially the chicken wing pizza."

For many it is a fun day to put their taste buds to the test and enjoy everything that the Tonawanda's has to offer.

"We have all kinds of sea food, beef, chicken, pork, pizza, donuts, subs, and fine deserts," said Foels. "We pretty much have something for everyone to enjoy."



Fatal Falls More Likely Among Non-Union Workers

Year after year, falls kill more construction workers than any other event. Forty percent of the 971 construction workers who died on the job in 2017 were killed by falls. And while this problem isn't new, it's also not changing. As the latest fatality data shows, more workers died from falls in 2017 than any time in the last 26 years. Failure to protect workers from falls is also the most common citation issued by OSHA. In fact, four of the top 10 violations last year were related to falls. This pervasive problem is why OSHA started the National Safety Stand-Down to Stop Falls in Construction in 2014. The Stand-Down is a voluntary program that encourages employers nationwide to take time out of the workday to focus on falls. To date, thousands of jobsites and millions of workers have participated in a variety of activities during these safety Stand-Downs.

As is the case in other parts of the country, fatal falls continue to be the leading cause of fatalities among construction workers in both New York State and New York City. Over the last ten years, 49 percent of all construction fatalities in New York State were caused by falls, compared to the national average of 40 percent. And while fatality rates among construction workers in New York City are finally on the decline, the rate for construction workers in New York State has risen 39 percent over the last five years. One possible explanation is the 2017 passage of Local Law 196, which set out minimum training requirements for workers and supervisors in New York City. By March of 2018, workers and supervisors had to have taken at least an OSHA 10-hour class. By June of 2019, these groups are required to have eight hours of additional training on fall prevention and four hours of training on supported scaffolds; supervisors are required to have at least an OSHA 30-hour class and additional training on fall prevention and other topics. These same provisions are not required in New York State.

With additional training requirements and more workplace protections in place for workers, it shouldn't come as a surprise that deaths from falls are finally on the decline in New York City. LIUNA and its signatory contractors have understood this for a long time. That's why the LIUNA Training and Education Fund has over 70 training centers throughout the U.S. and Canada – so LIUNA members already have hours of classroom and hands-on training before they ever step foot on a jobsite. And that's why LIUNA and other unions give workers a voice – so they can speak up before someone gets hurt. In many ways, Local Law 196 and the Scaffold Safety Law are helping to close the gap between the training and workplace rights that many non-union workers haven't had and those that union workers have had for years.

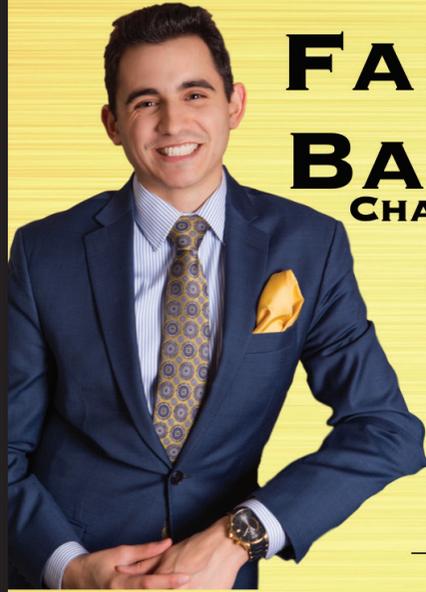
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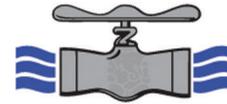
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