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County Clerk Standing Up to Cuomo in Face of Green Light Law



(Cont. on pg. 7)

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Spanbauer Getting Ready to Take His Seat on Council

By: Tony Farina

There will be a new mayor in town come the new year in Niagara Falls, and there will also be a new majority on the City Council as Republican John Spanbauer joins incumbent Republicans Chris Voccio and Kenny Tompkins (re-elected)

(Cont. on pg. 3)

Schuler Getting Shot at Redemption; Let's Hope He Succeeds

By: Tony Farina

I'm going to begin this story with an allusion to an utterance of Jesus in John 8:7, viz. "He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her."

Simply stated, let him who is without

(Cont. on pgs. 6)

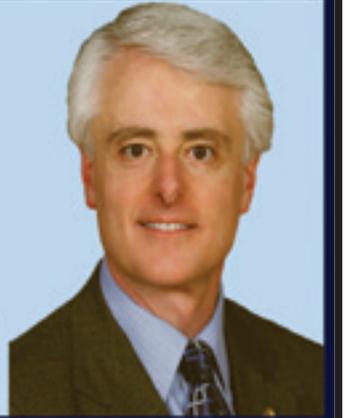
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NIAGARA FALLS

Restaino Pushing Collaborative Agenda at Water Board Meeting; Says Cabinet Announcement Delayed

Tony Farina

Niagara Falls Mayor-elect Robert Restaino is making an early start on his plans for a collaborative agenda, appearing at a Water Board meeting on Monday night to urge members to seize opportunities to work with the city on ways to maximize efficiency and control costs where possible, including on any potential staff additions.

"I look forward to exploring opportunities [to work together]," said Restaino who said he is looking to discuss those opportunities with the board and Executive Director Pat Fama in the coming days as he moves to negotiate service agreements with several governmental agencies, saying he is already close to one new agreement.

"We're close but I can't announce anything yet," the mayor-elect told the Reporter after his brief appearance at the Water Board meeting.

Mayor-elect Restaino also said there is a change in plans on announcing his cabinet, something he had hoped to do by the end of

this week, but which has now been moved back.

"I had been shooting for the announcement on Friday (December 20)," said Restaino, "but we still have work to do on finalizing the team and we won't be ready until next week at the earliest," hinting it could take even longer to finally announce who will be doing what in his administration.

"I have nine of 15 selections," he added, but he says he's still working on the rest of the cabinet which will begin with him come January 1 when he takes over city government's top job from three-term incumbent Paul Dyster.

It is clear that Restaino's election has generated a great deal of excitement in the city as newly elected City Councilman John Spanbauer told us this week (see story on Spanbauer).

"He told me he is going to have an open-door policy with lawmakers," said Spanbauer, adding that will be a far different policy than under Dyster.

So Restaino is letting people know, including lawmakers and governmental agencies like the



Niagara Falls Mayor-Elect Robert Restaino who assumes office on January 1st, 2020.

Water Board that he is very serious about hoping to build a collaborative network to help rejuvenate Niagara Falls, stressing the city is the hub of the region and if the city can regenerate itself, the rest of the region will prosper as well.

Restaino was firm but low-key in his brief remarks to the Water Board but there was no mistaking his message about working together.

"I'm hoping we can create opportunities," he told board, "and work collaboratively for the benefit

of all."

The board seemed ready to come to the table as it deals with its own problems, including funding for a project to monitor sanitary sewer overflows in LaSalle.

Stay tuned as the mayor-elect seems ready to light a fire under agencies within reach, urging them to tighten their belts and come to the table to find areas of agreement that will reduce costs and the burden on taxpayers going forward.

NIAGARA

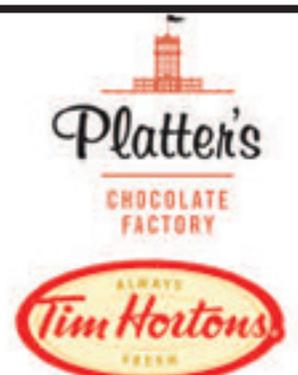


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Wilson: Lakeside Market

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

HAMILTON: "My Dog Died in the Fire - We Lost Everything"



Ken Hamilton

"My house burned down this morning," beautician JoAnne Abbo-Bradley later wrote on her Facebook page on November 24th, 2019. "My dog died in the fire. We lost everything," she said.

Could there have been an uglier event to have happened that Sunday morning? You might be surprised in how it all ended – so far.

JoAnne knows beauty. Perhaps that fire and the death of the family "shelter" dog certainly was no way to close out a Thanksgiving weekend; however, what followed would certainly make that Thanksgiving of 2019 one that would rival the mixed-emotions of the first thanksgiving of November of 1621, some 400-years earlier, with the Pilgrims on the Plymouth Plantation of Massachusetts.

The friends and neighbors of the Bradley family, along with the American Red Cross, were there as if they all were the Wampanoag Indians who joined the Pilgrims in love and fellowship. As bad as the City of Niagara Falls may seem, the individuals of this city are par excellent.

Geoff Jenkins, the owner of the Hyde Park Laundromat pointed that

out to me shortly after it opened. The Louisiana-born, San Franciscan had lived in many places in the States, and currently is living in NYC said that he was amazed at how many basket auctions that he had heard of among our citizens. He noted that we Niagarans complained a lot about things in the city, but were always willing to help each other out in their hours of need.

Those are things that most of us don't notice, as they are so common that we don't give ourselves the massive amounts of credit that we should.

Prior to that, JoAnne had often been critical of the city – remember, there is a difference between "the city" and its "citizens." In fact, back in 2012 two of her neighbors and she filed a lawsuit against the city of Niagara Falls as a result of a likely Love Canal leak that may have impacted where they lived in their Black Rock neighborhood of LaSalle, near the former Love Canal landfill. The alleged incursion happened as a result of a sewer excavation on Colvin Boulevard near 90th Street.

Love Canal, and the demise of the manufacturing that occurred during its filling, are both legendary Niagara Falls events. Much of the city has followed suit. Though beat-up by recent events, the Bradley family is just as up-beat as they can possibly be.

Gary Bradley wrote that, "This is a forced new beginning. We're getting there."

And maybe the city can follow suit with the spirit of the Bradleys.

"The abode.....it's not the Taj Mahal," Gary continued. "but its HOME. Gas, electric are on. Cable/internet in a day or two. Thanks again to everyone who donated so we can actually

live and have the basic amenities. Love you all!!!"

While cable and internet may not seem to be a necessity, it sure are indicative of a state of normality; and after losing everything, normality is progress.

JoAnne was extremely thrilled by the service that the Red Cross provided her. In a telephone conversation with the Buffalo and Western NY American Red Cross Chapter Communications Director Jay Bonafede, he said that his organization makes every effort to go "above and beyond" to individuals and families, providing "comfort and hope in the time of emergencies and disasters." He said that what happened to the Bradley family was indeed an emergency and a disaster.

In no attempt to take anything away from the seriousness of what happened to the Bradley family, it should be noted that the American Red Cross has long been a friend to the American servicemembers.

From the time of Clara Barton and her care for the wounded soldiers of the American Civil War, through our many battles and the stretches of peacetime activity, the Red Cross has been there, doing things such as sending more than 25-million parcels to Allied Prisoners of War during World War II, through not only establishing communications between soldiers and their families during emergencies at home and abroad, but also to providing emergency financial assistance for travel; and with other military aid societies, even have provided necessary burial funds for loved ones. When my brother, also a sailor, was critically-injured in an automobile accident while being transferred from New London CT to Long Beach CA,



JoAnne's dog that perished in the fire.

it was the Red Cross that alerted me to the situation so that I could go home during the emergency.

I do thank all of those whom, from time to time, thanks me for my military service; but what would be more appreciated is when you thank and support the American Red Cross for all that they do – here at home for our civilian population during both mass and personal disasters and emergencies, as they have done for the Bradley family and scores of others every year, and for our far-flung forces wherever they (we) serve.

As we Niagarans don't give enough credit to ourselves for how we help each other out, we certainly don't give enough to the American Red Cross for all that they do to help everyone out. You can reach your local Western New York Chapter at 716-886-7500 and personally thank those who serve – "those who serve" -- with a contribution to continue to do the good work for your neighbors and YOU.

Keep the beauty and hope in our lives – as JoAnne would do.

Spanbauer Cont. from Cover

on the panel, giving the GOP a 3 - 2 edge.

It is the first crack at politics for Spanbauer, a retired college administrator, but he says he's looking forward to the challenge of trying to help the Cataract City overcome the numerous financial problems it faces.

"I'm actually looking forward to it," said Spanbauer this week as he gets ready to face the music as an elected official for the first time in his life.

"I'm trying to do my homework and getting advice from past and present councilmembers as part of my preparation," said the thoughtful new lawmaker. "I think it should be exciting."

Spanbauer says he likes the idea of being a part of a new beginning and he says the new mayor, Robert Restaino, has said he will have an open-door policy with councilmen,

an idea that Spanbauer believes will help form a spirit of collaboration.

Perhaps the most interesting new dynamic that Spanbauer brings to the table is the thought that he's a one-term lawmaker, not interested in currying political favors but in doing what's in the best interests of the city and its taxpayers.

"I won't be worried about politics," says Spanbauer, suggesting he won't be holding a finger up in the air to test the political wind before making his voting decisions.

"I intend to vote for what I think will help the city, and I don't have a political agenda," says Spanbauer, an attitude that could help lawmakers finally deal with some of the tough political decisions that they have avoided in the past.

Spanbauer says he will have an outline of his goals in an editorial he will submit to this newspaper before the new year.



Niagara Falls City Council Candidate John Spanbauer.

And Spanbauer, like the rest of the community, will likely get his first look at the new mayor's team, expected to be announced on Friday, December 20.

Spanbauer realizes the work won't be done easily or quickly to repair the city, but he's gearing up

to make an all-out effort to help run the city like a business and not spend more than is taken in. Structural budget balance may be a long way off, but Spanbauer is sounding the right notes in the eyes of many.



THE CRIME

WEEKLY HEADLINES

-A Niagara Falls man, Carl Anthony, is accused of filming a 13-year-old girl while she changed and showered according to a criminal complaint filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office. Authorities allegedly obtained and executed a search warrant of Anthony's Niagara Falls residence where a hard drive showed two videos of the victim showering and changing in a bathroom. Anthony is charged with attempted production of child pornography and faces a maximum of 30 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Community Missions on Third Street in the morning hours of Tuesday, December 10th, 2019, after reports of an assault with a deadly weapon. According to the victim, who had two swollen eyes and a bloody lip as a result of the altercation, he was walking down Walnut Avenue before a man carrying bottles/cans in a bag asked him if he was "looking at him funny." The victim stated the man then threw down his bag and started attacking him. The suspect then pulled out what appeared to be a knife, jabbing at the victim, before picking up his bags and leaving the scene. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Firefighters were busy throughout the City of Niagara Falls on Tuesday, December 10th and Wednesday, December 11th, battling numerous vehicle fires in a short period of time. One of which, according to Niagara Falls Police, was a vehicle that was reported to be set on fire by someone committing arson. The first vehicle fire was on the 500 block alley between 6th and 7th Street. The second vehicle fire was on the 1500 block of 15th Street in the alley. The third vehicle fire was on the 3000 block of Niagara Street in the alley. A fourth vehicle was also reported damaged but not set on fire. Police are investigating the incidents as the criminal act of arson.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to a hit and run incident on the 2400 block of Whitney Avenue in the morning hours of Wednesday, December 11th, 2019. According to reports, the victim stated that at some point over the night her car was hit causing damage in excess of \$1,000.



-Niagara Falls Police are investigating a reported incident involving a gun that occurred on the 500 block of 5th Street in the evening hours of Wednesday, December 5th, 2019. According to police, the victim walked into police headquarters after being shot at - at least six times - by the boyfriend of her sister after a verbal argument at the sister's home. However, police did go to the area of the alleged shooting and found no bullets or shells.

-Niagara Falls Police executed a search warrant in the morning hours of Thursday, December 12th, 2019 on the 600 block of 16th Street. According to reports, a 41-year-old male was arrested and charged with numerous violations of the penal law for drugs and weapons. Drugs confiscated from the home included heroin, suboxone, and marijuana. Police also found a stun gun. Authorities described that they began to survey the house after receiving multiple complaints from residents who had small children in the area. Police stated the house was described as a "fast food joint" for drugs.

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Schuler Cont. from Cover

sin cast the first stone taken is from the Bible referring to a woman accused of adultery and doomed to be stoned to death.

There were several ways to go at this story of the appointment of admitted felon Kevin Schuler to the post of Niagara County public information officer last week, but I chose the Bible reference as a way to suggest no person is sin free.

County lawmakers voted 8 - 5 to give the plum job to Schuler despite his guilty plea to wire fraud charges in the Buffalo Billion public corruption case that led to the conviction of Schuler's former boss, Lou Ciminelli, on bid-rigging charges.

Schuler was the star prosecution witness in the case and legal experts confirm that without Schuler's testimony, the corruption trial was likely doomed to failure.

But cooperate he did, and as a result he was spared jail time and is hoping to move on with his life following the lengthy and grueling process that he went through as a witness and a defendant in the highly publicized case.

He has admitted his mistakes

and past errors and is hoping to make a comeback, and a majority of Niagara County lawmakers -- duly elected by taxpayers -- voted to give the man a second chance and while he will be on probation for a year, he now has the chance to find redemption.

There has been much public criticism of the appointment, but Schuler expected it and so far has held up well, hoping to move on now that he has been given that second chance to reclaim his life.

Schuler was a top aide to Ciminelli, and his knowledge of the Buffalo Billion bid-rigging charges was key to the government's success in prosecuting Ciminelli who is facing a 28-month prison term.

But before joining Ciminelli development, Schuler was a successful quasi-governmental figure with experience in economic development and he brings that resume to his new position as the county's public information officer at \$79,000.

Certainly, given what he's been through, Schuler is badly in need of a job and while his appointment



doesn't sit well with everybody, he made enough of an impression with the legislative screening committee and now lawmakers have hired him to make their case to the public.

Is he equipped to do the job? The answer would seem yes given his experience, and while he has to overcome his felony plea, at least he now has a chance to do that and move on with his life.

Rightfully, he will be under close watch for 52 weeks to see how he performs, and if he doesn't do a good job, the lawmakers who

appointed him will have a lot of answering to do to their constituents.

But the Niagara Reporter believes in second chances, and as we alluded to at the beginning of this piece, he who is without sin should cast the first stone. The guess is there are not many who would qualify for that first stone, so here's hoping Schuler does an about face and turns his life around for the good, now that he's been given that second chance.

We'll be watching, too.

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County Clerk Standing Up to Cuomo Cont. from Cover



By: Joseph Jastrzemski
Niagara County Clerk

Today is a disappointing day for New York as it marks the implementation of the state's legislation to grant driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. After numerous attempts to dissuade Gov. Cuomo and legislative leaders to put the brakes on New York's "Green Light" law, common sense and public interest have once again finished second to politically convenience and special interests.

For months, county clerks across our state called upon Gov. Cuomo and our state's DMV Commissioner to work with county clerks and ensure that the implementation of this legislation was done properly, yet our calls went unanswered. There are still several areas of concern regarding this legislation ranging from national security to public safety and taxpayer costs.

On Friday, I was joined at a press conference by clerks from Erie, Genesee, Allegany, and Wyoming counties as well as State Senator Rob Ort in raising the alarm about this soon to be enacted law.

The first concern is in regard to national security. Although the

NYS DMV outlines that these new licenses for illegal immigrants cannot be used for federal purposes, they neglect to inform concerned citizens that this aspect of the identification does not go into effect until the implementation of the Real ID Act. Until October 1 of 2020, these "Green Light" IDs may still be used to enter federal facilities or to travel on airlines. The ability to do so corresponds with the second point of concern raised by clerks across New York State, implementation.

Not only is it naïve, but also unreasonable to expect DMV workers around our state to decipher and verify foreign documentation for ID purposes. The training provided by New York State consisted of a 45-minute "webinar," and one-way conference calls between the DMV Commissioner and county clerks where questions were unable to be asked. This training was simply insufficient. Documents such as foreign marriage licenses to report cards are now going to be acceptable forms of identification for those wishing to get these new licenses, yet are wholly unacceptable for those American citizens attempting to obtain a license.

Finally, the most concerning is the directive for clerks and DMV workers to stand down and turn a blind eye to those attempting to register to vote with these new licenses. The directive from the top-down has been to allow these individuals to register to vote, and wait until the proper authorities catch these individuals. This is a dangerous message New York is sending to the residents of our state and it undermines our democracy.

Gov. Cuomo should have pulled the breaks on this "Green Light" law months ago. I'd like to personally thank Sen. Ort for standing with county clerks from across WNY against this disastrous legislation.

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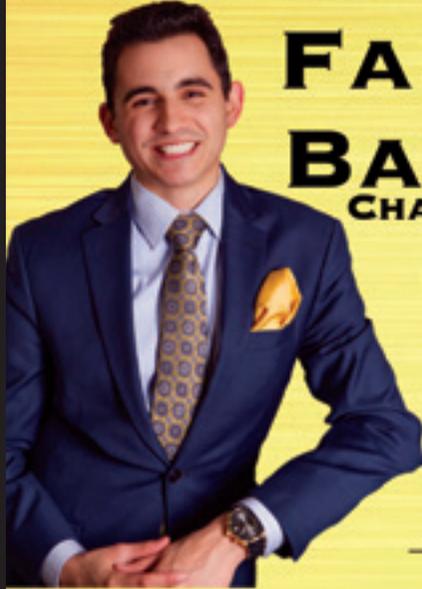
This holiday season serves as the perfect time to reflect on the past year and all of the things, people and acts we are most thankful for.

Laborers' Local #91 would like to extend a sincere thank you to the New York State Power Authority (NYPA), the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, New York State Parks, and all Niagara County School Districts for the extensive amount of good paying jobs they provided this past year to all of our locally employed workers who performed the updates, renovations and expansions to their properties. We would also like to commend those organizations on their outstanding safety practices which ensure all workers are able to enjoy a safe and productive work environment every day.

From everybody associated with Laborers' Local #91 and the Armand E. Sabitoni Training Facility, we would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a safe, prosperous new year - especially all of our members, retirees and their families, all of our signatory contractors and their families, everyone at the New York State Power Authority, the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, New York State Parks, and all Niagara County School Districts and their families, all members of the community who actively work to provide our members with the union employment that allows them to provide for their families, and to all men and women who are or have served this nation in our armed forces to ensure we can celebrate Christmas in safety and peace. Celebrate the true meaning of this holiday and give thanks for what we each have.



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