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(Cont. on pg. 4)

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Restaino and His New Team Will Take Over on Wednesday

By: Tony Farina

There is every expectation that Robert Restaino and his team will hit the ground running on Wednesday when a new administration takes over the reins of government in Niagara Falls.

(Cont. on pg. 2)

Chris's Corner: A New Year's Resolution

By: Chris Voccio
Niagara Falls City Councilman

Depending on when you're reading this column (I'm writing it during the last week-end of 2019, between Christmas and New Year's Day, when a new mayor will be sworn in along with a new Council member and a

(Cont. on pgs. 3)

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NIAGARA FALLS

Restaino and Team Cont. from Cover

As we reported in last week's editions, Mayor Restaino expects his cabinet to come to work armed with a playbook on how to make their departments run more effectively and efficiently in the coming days, especially in the first two weeks of his administration.

Some NFL coaches, including New England's Bill Belichick, have the first series of plays and sometimes even more, scripted before the game, and it appears that's the kind of thinking that Restaino is employing with his staff.

That staff includes his brother Anthony who will take over as city administrator after Robert Restaino takes the helm of the ship and wishes smooth sailing to outgoing chief executive Paul Dyster. Sources say Dyster and Restaino have had a cordial period of adjustment since the November election, cordial not necessarily friendly. But it is believed the Dyster team cooperated in the transition when necessary.

Also on tap at Wednesday's City Hall ceremonies will be the swearing in of new Councilmember John

Spanbauer and re-elected incumbent Kenny Tompkins, followed by a decision by the city's five lawmakers on who will take over as council president.

With Spanbauer's election, Republicans now hold a 3 to 2 advantage on the council, and it is likely that one of the GOP members will take over as leader of the council from Democrat Andy Touma, although nothing is certain as of this writing.

In the running for council chair, according to insiders, are incumbents Tompkins and Chris Voccio, and it is not clear yet how the voting will go. But the answer should be in before noon on Wednesday, and then the new mayor and council will take over and begin their journey into 2020 and beyond.

As Chris Voccio put it this week, there is reason for optimism for the people of the Cataract City.

"I'm bullish on the future of Niagara Falls," said Voccio. "With new leadership, sound policy decisions going forward and a little help from God Almighty, brighter days



Niagara Falls Mayor-Elect Robert Restaino is set to be sworn into office on January 1st, 2020.

are ahead."

The hope is, of course, among all the leadership, is that the new administration will be helped by the city's share of the revenue-sharing payments that the Seneca Nation has withheld from the state since 2017. That would be a strong signal that Restaino's efforts to push his collaboration agenda are paying off as he has been known to be cultivating Seneca leaders about carving a

new future and ending the stalemate would be a great start.

We also expect some early announcements from Restaino about some other collaborative alliances that he has been cultivating in an effort to help Niagara Falls, the leading player in the future of the region, to regain its strength and help the entire region grow stronger.

We'll all be watching.

NIAGARA



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Chris's Corner Cont. from Cover: A New Year's Resolution

Chris Voccio is a Niagara Falls City Council member and can be reached at ChrisVoccio@gmail.com.



Chris Voccio
NF City Councilman

new Council Chairman.)

There's been a lot of social media chatter related to the recently-passed garbage fee, the city budget, the recent elections, not to mention all of the other issues swirling around local and national politics.

Some of the discourse has been nothing short of atrocious. The demonization of people with differing views on various topics has become far too toxic. The language, and the casual accusations made about good people who we may disagree with, is disgusting.

As you may know, I am a Republican who believes in limited government and low taxation. But the idea that people who may differ with me or other elected officials on any number of issues or ideas are somehow evil, or unworthy, is disturbing.

And the idea that everyone in a

particular party must march lockstep together is counterproductive to say the least.

There are differences within parties all the time. I have often voted with one or two members of the other party, and I've written previously that this diversity of thought within parties is natural and healthy. And remember, most Council votes are unanimous, with all of us agreeing on the issue at hand.

But now, with the proliferation of social media, it appears we're breaking up into splinter groups, with litmus tests that must be passed to avoid being attacked.

There was a time, before the advent of social media, when we would all think thoughts that we would never share. We would be embarrassed that we even thought them, and we would never utter them aloud. Even our closest friends and family members wouldn't know what had popped into our heads.

But now, with a social media account and a smartphone, we rush to put those thoughts on the worldwide web for all to see. What a crime against humanity it would be not to share our most inner thoughts with the entire world. Our anger, our rage, all of our emotions, unchecked by thought or judgment. It must all be shared. Immediately.

Some of this craziness has spread to our City Council meetings, during the public speaking portion of the meeting, and sometimes throughout the entire meeting. While most speakers



and attendees speak with decorum and the respect for others you would expect in a deliberative assembly in the United States of America, some speakers bring something entirely different to the podium. And sometimes we hear muttered comments from attendees which are disruptive of the meetings and create unnecessary distractions for citizens who want to watch the people's business being conducted.

It isn't a good sign.

So as we enter 2020 with a new mayor, a new administration, a new Council member and a new Council majority, let's resolve to be more reflective and put some thought into what we

post on social media, how we behave at Council meetings (and everywhere else) and what language we use, whether talking with someone sitting in front of us or typing away on our phones.

Let's agree to put a little more thought into the things we say, and write. Let's all remember that the sun will still rise in the morning, even if we don't share our every compelling thought or say what pops into our heads at any given moment.

And let's be optimistic for Niagara Falls, under new leadership and with abounding opportunities for a brighter future.

Mike's Marketside is Four-Star Breakfast Nook

Tony Farina

I've been around for a few years covering Western New York for newspapers and television and along the way visiting the famous and infamous "watering holes" of the day as well as the best and sometimes, the worst, diners and restaurants. I think I've seen them all.

I can say that based on my many years of experience that Mike's Marketside, located in the Niagara Falls City Market compound, now has moved to the top of my list for favorite dining spots of all time, or should I say breakfast nooks second to none, offering great coffee and service in a very pleasant and cozy environment.

The warm and friendly greetings from the owner, Mike Poletti, are a perfect accompaniment to breakfast in the slice of a diner that is normally only open until noon but offering

the best assortment of eggs and all the rest of the foods that make breakfast a delight while reading the newspapers or visiting with friends.

"I've been a long-time patron," says Niagara Falls attorney Jim Roscetti, chairman of the board of Memorial Medical Center. "Mike's offers good food and a place to see many good friends. Mike and his son, Tony, are terrific hosts."

In fact it was just last week that I saw Jim and most of his law firm partners enjoying the bacon and eggs, just like I was, at Mike's. You could tell how much they loved the food, wolfing it down in no time, just like me.

Former Niagara Falls Mayor Vince Anello is another long-time fan of Mike's Marketside, saying people come across the bridge from Canada just to have breakfast at the popular refuge operated by Mike Poletti and his staff.

"The help is first class and the



food is, too," says the former mayor who has been a patron of the diner for more years than he cares to mention.

Mike's Marketside is well known near and far and the reason is the food and the service are top shelf. You can have breakfast or you can have breakfast at Mike's, and believe me there is a difference. Something in the way the eggs are cooked just right seems to make them special.

So if you're looking for a place

to relax, enjoy pleasant surroundings in a warm nook of a diner, I would recommend you stop in to Mike's and see for yourself what I'm talking about.

I'm a reporter, not a restaurant reviewer, but I'm writing this little item because I think Mike's Marketside deserves the mention for the service and food it offers to anyone looking for the best breakfast anywhere and a little escape from franchise fare.

See you at Mike's!



THE CRIME

SPECIAL EDITION CONT. FROM COVER



Ken Hamilton

Highland's story IS not only a Niagara Falls' story, it is what happened here that caused the events of concern, why they happened and what is soon to come to the surrounding neighborhoods of the city and its suburbs – unless we fix our thinking around it. That's why the Reporter exists.

While in the absence of an autopsy and the final Niagara Falls NY Police Department report, restaurateur Jesse Richardson was

found dead last week in his Calumet Avenue home of at least one gunshot wound.

Richardson's home was a 4-minute walk from the corner of Highland and Centre avenues; and it was there where in the years of the depression of 1929 there once stood the neighborhood Centre Avenue Elementary School, and across from it was a store owned by the family of Armand Castellani, himself being one of the founders of the TOPS Supermarket chain that eventually became the largest grocery retailer in western and central NY and parts of Pennsylvania. It was also there where some 4-decades ago, Fred and Alma Brown staked their claim to servicing the community much as the Castellani's had once done and opened their store. Brown expanded his operation in a newer, much larger building as a Wilson's Farms franchisee of TOPS, subsequently breaking off and going at it on his

own. Some 2-decades ago, Richardson established the restaurant that bears his name and specialized in ribs, wings, subs, chicken and seafood.

The neighborhood had always been an immigrant community and one of several important business centers in the city; one that was filled with opportunity and in constant change. But lately, the change hasn't been so good, nor has the area's reputation.

Either despite or because of the social engineering that took place and has continued since the beginning of World War Two, where once stood a plethora of homeownership units and businesses, now the largest and most abundant housing units are the heirs of military war housing that have become public housing, and of HUD Section-8 units. It has largely become a sanctuary for the poor and otherwise less-privileged. Whereas through the 1940s and 60s, Louis the USPS mailman told this writer that he delivered mail to a street that once had 3,000 residents living on it, not including the rest of the Highland neighborhood that stretches south from Lafayette Avenue to the former Lehigh Railroad switch yards, west to the railroad prior to Montegale and McKoon avenues, and then eastward to Hyde Park Blvd.

The once busy Highland Avenue once sat amid an industrial hub where 15,000 Niagara-area citizens found living wage employment in the private sector; where there were no vacant lots and even fewer vacant hopes. Now, even though you can shoot a bullet down the street and not hit anything, in the last few decades, too many bullets have been fired and have hit their mark in far too many citizens.

Found dead of at least one gunshot wound in his Calumet Avenue home last week was restaurateur Jesse Richardson. In front of his restaurant more than 300 people attended a candlelight vigil for him. In attendance was Mayor-elect Robert Restaino, city councilmen Ezra Scott, William Kennedy and Ken Tompkins, as well as Superintendent of Police Tom Licata. More importantly, there were the preachers and people of the community. The mantra of the night was, "If you see something, say something," but



Jesse Richardson, photographed above, made a mark in the Niagara Falls community.

all befuddled as to where do we go from here.

The Niagara Reporter means no diminishment on the death of Richardson and will be doing a comprehensive series on crime in Niagara Falls – especially as it pertains to homicides, but as stated, it is still too early to ascertain what happened on the night of his shooting.

In all of it, the echoes of the July 27, 2019 shooting of Roderick Haslip, that took place just a 3-minute walk eastwardly down Centre Avenue from where Richardson's vigil took place, have all but faded from memory; and the gun shots that were heard a brisk 3-minute northerly walk up Highland just hours after the vigil, may have even involved some of those who may have been at Richardson's vigil.

Government can't fix the problem, and government housing like that at HOPE-VI – that was supposed to make the community safer, has changed nothing. We cannot stop all crime, but if understand it, we certainly can anticipate and abate it. Interviews with the families of victims, those who were involved in crimes and those who have redeemed themselves have already been had, set-up and with more to come.

If you would like to be a part of the story or the solution – and are willing to use your name, then please message me on Facebook.

Stay tuned and in touch.

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Niagara County Independence Party Endorses Seaman for Niagara County District Attorney

Staff Reports

The Niagara County Independence Party has announced its endorsement of Brian Seaman for the office of Niagara County District Attorney.

The announcement was made by county Independence Party Chairwoman Susan Angelo-Eberwein who said, "Strong law enforcement is of utmost importance, and Brian Seaman's educational background and experience as a prosecutor make him an ideal candidate for District Attorney. As an Assistant District Attorney Seaman took on a wide variety of criminal prosecutions ranging from high-profile white-collar crimes to murders. His hard work and success as a prosecutor earned him the respect of the law enforcement community throughout the County, and the Independence Party is proud to endorse him in the upcoming election."

Eberwein continued, "In his interview with us, Brian demon-

strated a keen understanding of the challenges facing law enforcement in this day and age. He is very mindful of the victims of crime and is committed to putting in the hard work necessary to bring those who have committed crimes to justice. I have no doubt that Brian Seaman will continue the excellent work that we expect from our District Attorney's Office."

In addition to his experience as a prosecutor, Brian Seaman has served as a law clerk to a United States Magistrate Judge in the federal court system, and as municipal attorney to several Niagara County municipalities.

He has also practiced law privately as a partner in the law firm Seaman Norris LLP. Seaman is a Lockport High School graduate and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame, cum laude, and his law degree from Loyola University Chicago Law School, magna cum laude.

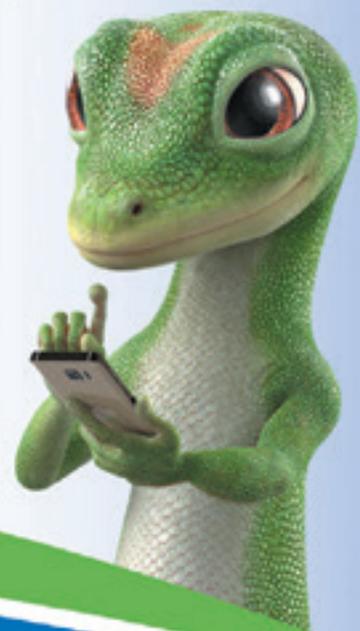


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DA, Sheriff Take to Airwaves to Warn About DWI Dangers

Tony Farina

The dangers of drinking and driving, especially during these holiday times, are vividly brought home in a STOP DWI special being broadcast this week through Friday continuously for 24 hours a day on Niagararadio.net, the Studio Show, the popular Sal Paonessa internet radio-tv program.

The county's top prosecutor and acting sheriff took part in the program to alert parents and young people about the terrible consequences and tragedy that can result on the road from driving and drinking.

"We wanted people to be able to see just what can happen to people's lives if they are arrested for DWI," said Acting Sheriff Michael Filicetti who was joined in the show by District Attorney Caroline Wojtaszek, Capt. Robert Richards of the Sheriff's Department, and host Sal Paonessa, a retired Niagara Falls police lieutenant and a part-time Town of Niagara police officer.

Particularly gripping are video and dramatizations of the sometimes late-night visits to the family of a drunk driving accident victim by officers to inform family members of a death, often of a young person just starting out in life. It is not for the faint of heart but should sound the alarm bells for parents of young people who need to monitor their children's behavior.

Also, the show highlights what happens to someone stopped and



Niagara County District Attorney
Caroline Wojtaszek.

arrested for DWI, the booking and arraignment process and the prosecution in court, an unpleasant and life-changing experience that can potentially lead to jail time.

"We are hoping parents watch this and take the steps necessary to protect their family members," said Paonessa, "warning young people what potentially awaits them on the road if they drink and drive, consequences that could change their lives forever.

Sal says the program will run every day through Friday during these holiday times and he is hoping that parents and young people check it out and get some good advice avoiding a DWI accident or arrest, an experience that no parents or young people need to enjoy the holidays.



Undersheriff Michael Filicetti.



Registered Apprenticeship

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What are some advantages of Registered Apprenticeship?

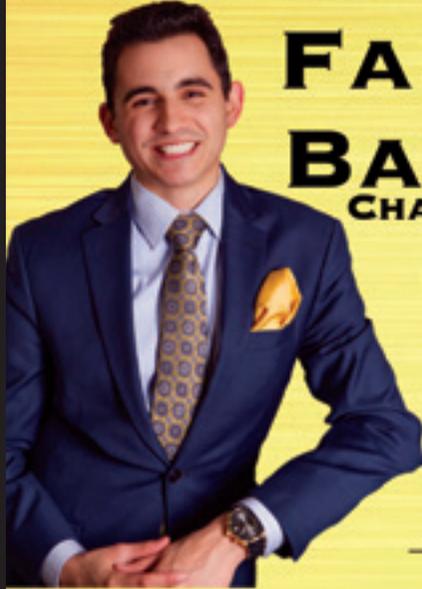
The benefits to employers are: more highly skilled employees, reduced turnover rates, higher productivity, lower investment in recruitment, a more diverse workforce, a new pool of workers and the creation of career pathways. The benefits to registered apprentices are: being nationally recognized and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

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

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