

## Questions for the mayor



Who's next?

# NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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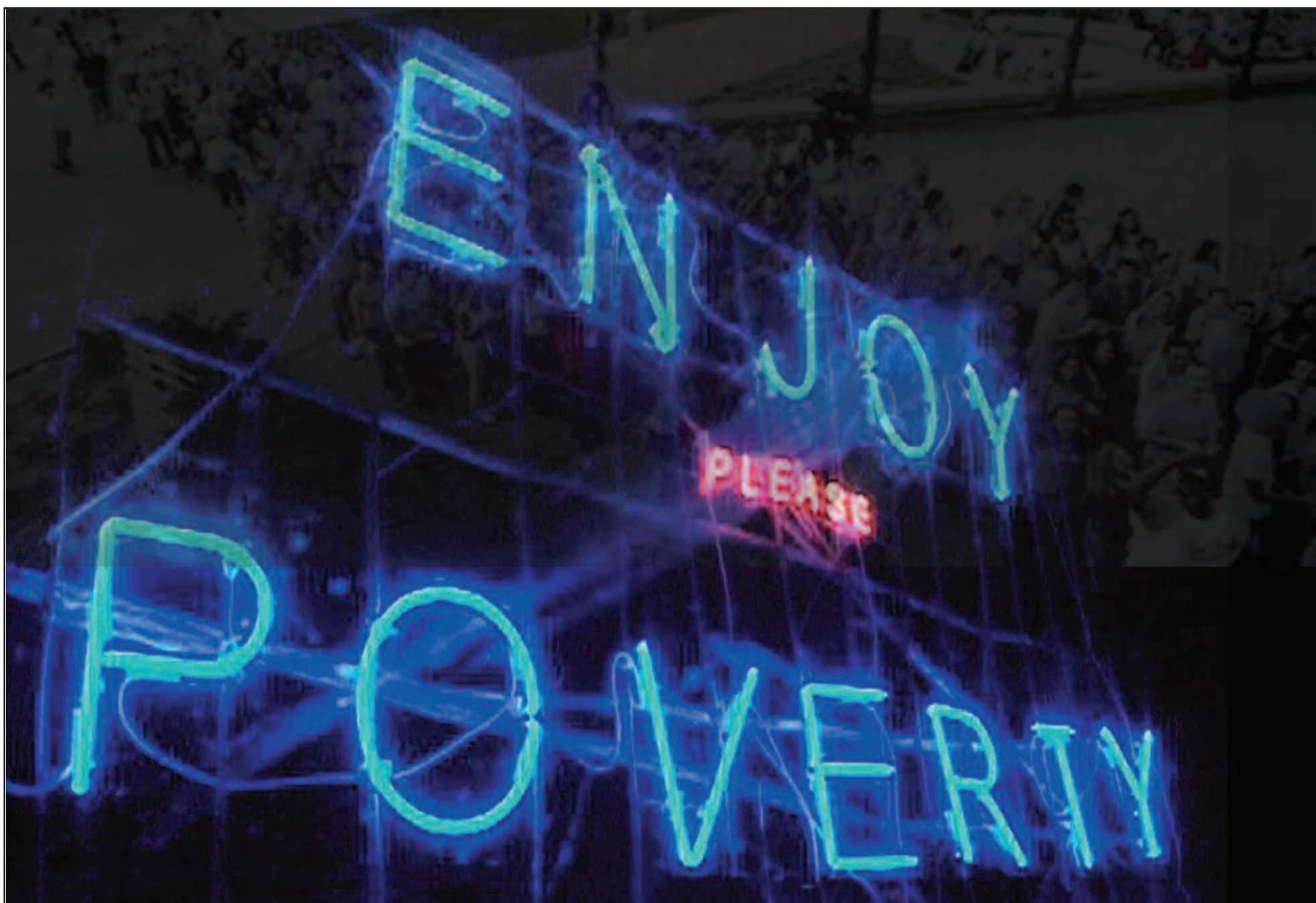
FREE

DEC 17 - DEC 31 , 2015

VOL. 16, NO. 49

FREE

### Fighting poverty is big business in Falls; But who profits the most?



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# Poverty Industry Provides Growth Sector For Struggling Falls Economy

## Mike Hudson

The city of Niagara Falls is home to one of the natural wonders of the world, the mighty cataracts that bring 8 million tourists into the city each year.

The Falls also benefits from the local share of slot machine revenue generated at the Seneca Niagara Casino. In recent years, close to \$200 million has been paid out to city officials, for the purpose of promoting economic development in the city.

With the exception of New York City, no other municipality in the state rakes in the tourism dollars like Niagara Falls. And, even though four other municipalities have Indian casinos, none generate the revenue for local government like the Seneca Niagara Casino does here.

On top of that, property owners in Niagara Falls are the most highly taxed in New York State, according to the state's Financial Restructuring Board for Local Governments.

New York State is the highest taxed state in the USA, according to WalletHub. This makes Niagara Falls literally the highest taxed city in the highest taxed state.

So why is the biggest growth industry the city has the poverty industry, an economy based on the care of generational welfare recipients, drug addicts, the indigent and mentally ill, registered sex offenders and other ex-convicts?

Why are the majority of "living wage jobs" that politicians talk about constantly here limited to those offered by the police and fire departments, the school district, the hospital and the various local social service agencies and other caretaker agencies?

The city has become a veritable Mecca for social service agencies and charities alike, and many of the "living wage" salaries paid to people working in Niagara Falls fall into this sector. Of course, that doesn't mean that these wage earners live in Niagara Falls.

Agencies and organizations ranging from the behemoth Niagara Falls Housing Authority, whose executive director, Stephanie Cowart, earns more than \$100,000 a year, down to boutique institutions like Carolyn's House, a battered women's shelter on Sixth Street, queue up, looking for taxpayer funded support.

The politicians want to give them what they want, their generosity with other people's money makes for great headlines and photo opportunities. In the city of Niagara Falls, so much is given that taxes invariably rise to meet the costs.

But a poverty industry-based economy has a dark side. The higher taxes invariably lead some businesses to locate elsewhere, beyond the borders of a municipality whose leaders believe the productive elements of society should underwrite the existence of the non-productive segment.

Recently, Dupont announced the closing of its Chemours plant here, a blow that will result in the loss of 200 private sector jobs paying between \$60,000 and \$70,000 each on average. Water and sewer rates may go up by as much as 6 percent for remaining customers.

While the high taxes connected with the poverty industry were not mentioned by



What is the future of Pine Ave.?



When we were not a poverty industry city.

company officials as a reason for closing, you can bet the tax situation here in the most heavily taxed municipality in the state was looked at prior to the decision being made.

And the decision by Fichte, Endl & Elmer Eyecare to relocate from the Pine Avenue offices it had maintained for decades may provide a commentary not only on the city's tax structure but the state of Pine Avenue as well.

Fichte moved the operation to Porter Road in the Town of Niagara, selling the Pine Avenue facility to Horizon Health Services, which plans to open a methadone clinic for recovering heroin addicts there. It's a far

cry from the late 1990s when then mayor James Galie erected signs proclaiming the Pine Avenue strip to be the city's "Little Italy," and predicted a revival that would one day become a tourism magnet in its own right.

And in all honesty, a methadone clinic may be more in line with what Pine Avenue is becoming, a thoroughfare dominated by pawnshops, bail bondsmen, liquor stores, check cashing operations and saloons common to distressed neighborhoods across the country.

**MONEY CAN'T BUY  
HAPPINESS, BUT  
NEITHER CAN  
POVERTY.**

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Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all easy; and he that riseth late must trot all day, and shall scarce overtake his business at night; while laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes him.

(Benjamin Franklin)

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## NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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**CHAIRMAN & EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
**Frank Parlato**

**Managing Editor**  
**Dr. Chitra Selvaraj**

**Senior Editor**  
**Tony Farina**

**PHONE:** (716) 284-5595

**P.O. Box 3083, Niagara Falls, N.Y. 14304**  
**E-mail:** news1926@gmail.com  
**Website:** www.niagarafallsreporter.com

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# Dyster's Letter to Top City Employees Touches Off Fear And Paranoia For The Holidays

**Anna Howard**

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster sent a chilling letter to all of his department heads and select appointees this Monday and Tuesday thanking the city employees for their service, and advising them that if they want to potentially keep their jobs, to put it a letter of intent along with a resume and give it to his secretary, Nick Melson, no later than December 21.

Excellent sources deep within city hall have told us that the pre-holiday Dyster letter has sent waves of Christmas time paranoia and fear from the halls of city hall to the outlying administration offices across the city.

No one, obviously, wants to head to the unemployment line between Christmas and the New Year.

We understand that the mayor and his secretary are going to be holding meetings from December 21-30 with the council members to review the current list of top city employees before anyone is recommended for termination and replacement. Involving the council in what are clearly personnel matters risks violating the city charter by drawing the council into what is sure to be

resulting personnel drama if some top Dyster people are marched out the door.

The Reporter has received a number of calls as to who is alleged to be on the termination and replacement list. It would be highly irresponsible to print names that are linked to nothing more than rumors at this time. But the Reporter does note that the recent Dyster election saw the mayor scrambling to cobble together a coalition of votes. That scramble means that there is the possibility that Dyster has made promises and deals during the election that may result in putting bullseyes on the backs of some of his top people. The very large and ever growing city hall salaries are the very thing that attracted politicians who are in need of employment to the mayoral campaign in the first place. Such is politics.

All of this is rank speculation.

What is fact, is that Mayor Dyster shoes to send a letter to his top employees asking for their resumes.

It has set off anger across the ranks of the department heads and non-union workers as the mood in the building is tense and rife with rumors as to who may be getting removed and who the replacements could be.



**Mayor Paul Dyster sent a letter to department heads and non-union city employees seeking their resumes. This has led to speculation that the mayor may be choosing to replace some employees not protected by civil service.**

## Religious Organization Takes Big Role In New Look Niagara Falls Economy

**Mike Hudson**

For \$325 a month and a \$100 deposit, a man can get a 14' x 8' single occupancy room, with a built in dresser and a wardrobe closet, in the heart of downtown Niagara Falls, just steps away from the public library and Harry F. Abate Elementary School.

He'd have to agree to shared bathroom and shower facilities, but since many prospective tenants would have been institutionalized previously, this probably wouldn't be a problem.

He'd also have to agree to not indulge in illegal drugs, get drunk, gamble, look at pornography or use profane language during his stay at what used to be the Niagara Falls Young Men's Christian Association facility on



**The old YMCA is now owned and operated by the Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission. Religious organizations are taking a greater and greater role in the traditionally secular world of public policy here, as the city transitions from an economy based on manufacturing and tourism to one based on taking care of people who can't take care of themselves.**

Portage Road.

The old YMCA was sold and today it is operated by the Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission, a religious organization headed up Shaun Smith.

Smith is providing a valuable service in Niagara Falls. As more and more city residents fall into the common traps of poverty -- alcoholism, drug and gambling addictions -- they need somewhere to go.

According to Smith, in the fall of 2006, during a conversation with Tom McLaughlin, then Executive Director of the Buffalo City Mission, it became clear that Niagara Falls needed a greater infrastructure of emergency shelter care due to its increasing rate of homelessness and addiction. The vision was solidified and by the spring of 2007 the Niagara Gospel Rescue Mission was formed as a non-

profit corporation.

The primary focus of this ministry would be to meet not only the necessary physical needs of the people it serves, but more importantly, address their core spiritual needs by sharing with them God's purposeful plan for their lives, Smith added.

Starting out with just a mobile RV soup kitchen in 2007, Niagara Gospel Ministry was able to take over a small, unused church at the corner of 22nd and Linwood the next year. In 2010, the organization turned a former rooming house at 1023 Ferry Avenue into a 13-bed homeless shelter and then, in May of this year, the Mission bought the landmark, 110-year-old YMCA building for \$1.

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## Reporter's Call For An Elected City Controller Meets With Rousing Support

The Reporter has written any number of articles in the past calling for changes in city government, but never - never - have we received such an immediate and supportive response as our column last week where we called for the city controller position to be made an elected position.

The readers had an almost intuitive response in as much as they know that something is elementally wrong in the way the city manages its finances, develops its annual budget, and administers its casino revenue account. We agree.

In fact, the State Comptroller blistered the city's hind end two years ago in an audit that listed numerous fiscal management deficiencies. This newspaper has reported at length on both the fiscal deficiencies and the state audit. Hence our call last week for an elected controller.

The current dysfunctional relationship between the council and mayor in relation to the position of controller is well documented. Time and again the council and

mayor perform a little playlet of good cop bad cop as they cynically reduce the controller position to a foil in their political games. As we wrote last week the moving of the controller to a position of election would give the position equal footing with the mayor and council.

We're told that our common sense call for change has met with wide agreement among those in the know both in the city and at this end of the state. Additionally, the possibility of the controller spot going up for election has many politicians and would be politicians considering a run for the controller's office...if the city charter is modified and the appointed position become one of election.

Frankly, we aren't surprised by the attention the job has garnered since at approximately \$102,000 per year the Niagara Falls controller is paid more than the Buffalo city controller. That gives plenty of potential candidates one hundred and two thousand reasons to consider the race.

The Reporter is pleased to have done



a public service by tossing this recommendation on the community's proverbial table for consideration. After all, we're not here to simply report the news, we'd like to think that occasionally we come up with a good suggestion.

**Maria Brown is the city's longtime controller. She is responsible for overseeing the city's finances and serves at the will of the mayor and the council.**

**If the position were elected, as it is in many cities, the office would be independent of the political whims of spendthrift officials. An elected controller cannot propose to spend money but can oppose the spending on the grounds that it is irresponsible.**

**An appointed controller has to be concerned about calling out her bosses - the mayor and council - on being wasteful.**

**In the highest taxed city in the highest taxed state, it makes sense to have an independent, elected controller who can fearlessly put the brakes on the spending that has hit this city like a plague.**

## Sex Offenders Drive Down Property Values, Quality of Life

### Mike Hudson

One of the most highly publicized aspects of the city's turn toward the poverty industry has been the open armed embrace given to registered sex offenders here.

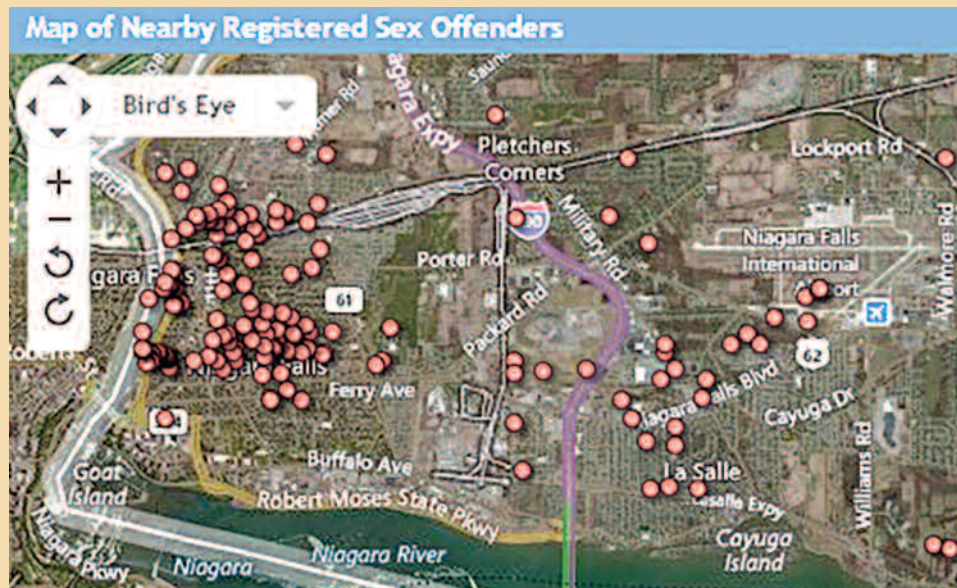
According to the authoritative website Homefacts.com, there are 164 registered sex offenders living in the city of Niagara Falls this week, well over double the 70 who were living here in December 2007.

That's one sexual predator for every 313 residents, the highest per capita number in the state of New York. The Niagara County average is one for every 726 residents, and across the state it is one for every 1,097 residents.

Since the 2010 census showed Niagara Falls had fewer than 200 more residents than the 50,000 needed to qualify for millions in federal Community Development Block Grant funding, critics speculated that the welcoming policy was a deliberate attempt to bolster the population numbers.

This was denied vehemently by Mayor Paul Dyster and former state assemblywoman Francine Del Monte at a public meeting on the subject held at Niagara Street Elementary School in 2009. A rooming house where as many as 25 registered sex offenders lived at the time was located less than 1,000 feet from the school, in violation of state law.

Since no one will hire them and their families often don't want to have anything to do with them, registered sex offenders are completely dependent upon the various social services agencies that serve the Niagara Falls community for food, clothing, shelter, medical care and psychological counseling.



They represent the top of the pyramid in an economy that is becoming increasingly based on the care and feeding of those who cannot or will not care for and feed themselves.

Many of the offenders listed on the registry come from outside the city, and even outside the state. This is a highly unusual situation and one that has not been addressed by any public official here.

The Niagara Falls Reporter has run profiles of these perverts and recounted their heinous acts on so many occasions that to do so again here just seems gratuitous.

Suffice to say that the vast majority of the 164 committed their offenses against children, and that it is widely believed there is no "cure" for the sort of sexual perversion that leads these individuals to do what they do.

The stunningly high population of registered sex offenders here begs the question

— What are the numbers for other categories of paroled felons, murderers, robbers, arsonists and more?

This we cannot know. The state Parole Board takes a dim view on the release of such information, referring to the parolees' "right to privacy" and other issues.

What we can know is that the presence of such undesirables in a community invariably drives down property values

Citing a 2008 study, Slate magazine reported that houses located next door to a registered sex offender drop by 12 percent in value. And the picture gets even bleaker when you consider that sex offenders not only affect the value of adjacent properties, but those nearby. On average, homes located within an 0.1 mile radius of a registered sex offender drop in value by 4 percent, the study showed.

In Niagara Falls, it would be difficult to find a home today that is not located 0.1 mile or less from a registered sex offender.

The disproportionately high number of registered sex offenders living in Niagara Falls is not something that happened by coincidence. It is the result of very deliberate public policy decisions made on the state and local level by elected and appointed officials charged with overseeing the city's affairs.

Why the taxpayer gets to see are the results of such policies. To experience the poverty industry firsthand.



**"Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received-- only what you have given."**

**— Francis of Assisi**



# We Told You So: Dyster Administration Was Engineered to Fail From the Start

**Anna Howard**

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster's city hall now has its very own version of the hit 1988 romantic comedy, Groundhog Day, that starred Bill Murray and Andie McDowell. Just as Bill Murray, in pursuit of Andie McDowell, was condemned to relive Groundhog Day until he could understand the errors of his ways, so too are the residents condemned to suffer from the errors of Paul Dyster's ways as he annually, and insincerely, places his want ad for a city engineer. The latest incarnation of the mayor's scheme had him placing his call for a city engineer in local papers and on monster.com last week.

This newspaper first reported in 2009 on what we saw as a three part Dyster city engineer agenda.

First, the mayor fired city engineer, Bob Curtis, immediately upon becoming mayor. Second, the mayor began hiring outside engineer consultants. Third, His Honor papered over the costly problems caused by the lack of an engineer by claiming that he couldn't find anyone to assume the engineer position because it called for city residency and paid an allegedly paltry \$96,000.

The Reporter detailed in 2009 how the hiring of an engineer consultant cost the taxpayers \$14,500 (minimum) per month for 18 (minimum) months as the courthouse



**The City had a fully qualified engineer, Jeffrey Skurka. Mayor Dyster fired him.**

was constructed. Mayor Dyster, after the courthouse was finished, then rehired the same outside consultant to oversee the repairs to the courthouse that had to be made post-completion...repairs that shouldn't have been necessary had the city and consultant been doing their respective jobs to begin with.

But, this bad management hasn't seemed to bother Dyster as the lack of an engineer has caused the city to bumble from one major project snafu to another: courthouse, Lewiston Road rebuild, ice pavilion, Tenth Street rebuild, Underground Railroad Interpretive Center, and 72nd Street rebuild.

The Reporter has written at length as to how the Dyster administration, from day

one, was "engineered to fail".

As for the mayor's claim that he can't fill the engineer position due to the city residency requirement, well, let's take a look at the facts of the matter. The mayor's first top-hire, Donna Owens, traveled all the way from Atlanta to work for Dyster. The former economic development chief, Peter Kay, drove in from Toledo, Ohio. The corporation counsel, Craig Johnson, moved to the city from Tonawanda. City engineer Ali Marzban arrived from Los Angeles and city engineer Jeffrey Skurka accepted the position while living on the southern tier. Skurka, who knew his job, was eventually fired for doing his job...that's two good engineers fired by Dyster - Curtis and Skurka - in case you're keeping score.

As to Dyster administration claims that low pay is scaring away engineer candidates, the mayor is all wet. The engineer salary at \$96,000 is right in the wheelhouse of his other department head hot shots.

What are we saying? We're repeating what we first wrote more than six years ago when we saw the firing of Bob Curtis, an eminently qualified engineer, for what it was: the removing of the taxpayers' watchdog in preference to the hiring of friendly outside engineer consultants.

The consequences of the "no city engineer" plan have been monumental as one major city project after another has gone over budget, fallen behind schedule, and or,

resulted in legal action against the city.

The simple fact of the matter isn't that the Dyster administration can't find an engineer to hire, the fact is the Dyster administration has cynically refused to hire an engineer.

## Free Workshops for Families of Special Needs Children Offered

NIAGARA COUNTY- Parent Network of WNY has announced it will conduct several free workshops in Niagara County during the month of January. Parents and Families who have children and/or young adults with special needs are invited to attend.

"These workshops will provide useful information, tips and strategies," said David Scherff in a release to the Reporter. "All workshops offered are free of charge for families of individuals with disabilities."

For more information or to register, call (716) 332-4170, email [info@parentnetworkwny.org](mailto:info@parentnetworkwny.org) or visit online at [parentnetworkwny.org](http://parentnetworkwny.org).

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# Housing Authority a Key Player in Commodification of Human Services

**Mike Hudson**

Perhaps no agency has benefitted more from the commodification of poverty in Niagara Falls in recent years than the city’s Housing Authority.

Created in 1942 to provide housing for soldiers, sailors, Marines and others involved in the war effort, the agency has evolved through the years to provide not only housing, but also a variety of programs and services to meet the needs of the disadvantaged Niagara Falls community.

Job training and development programs, career readiness instruction, computer instruction, after-school tutorial programs, health and wellness workshops, parenting classes, financial literacy and senior citizens activities all now fall under the Housing Authority’s aegis.

“We are dedicated to promoting self-sufficiency and improving the overall quality of life of those that we serve,” said Stephanie Cowart, the Housing Authority’s executive director. “We are committed to empowering and enriching the Niagara Falls community.”

Promoting self-sufficiency is a lofty goal but critics question whether taxpayer subsidized public housing – the main product offered by Cowart and her agency – is an effective way of going about it.



**The taxpayer subsidized housing in Beloved Community cost about \$300,000 per unit to develop. This shows that the poverty industry can be very lucrative for builders and developers.**

Consider the HOPE VI housing project – now known as Beloved Community – an \$80 million construction project that resulted in the creation of 215 housing units on Calumet Avenue, the site of the old Center Court housing project.

By dividing the \$80 million cost by the resulting 215 units, one will quickly see that each unit of subsidized housing cost the taxpayers a bit over \$372,000. Since the median value for a single family home in the city is just \$62,000, those living in Beloved Community are actually enjoying a somewhat affluent lifestyle, with their homes valued at six times what the average Niagara Falls resident is able to afford.



Taking the plunge into “self-sufficiency” – and away from Section 8 and other housing subsidy programs – would undoubtedly lower the standard of living for anyone lucky enough to have been granted space in Beloved Community.

According to the Housing Authority website, not all of the units are occupied by the “low to moderate income” class that makes up much of the subsidized housing market in Niagara Falls, but no numbers are available concerning those who might be paying anything near what the market rate would be on what amount to luxury condominiums.

The Housing Authority also controls the projects at Jordan Gardens and Packard Court – two of the city’s high crime hotspots – Spallino Towers on 10th Street near Portage Road and Wrobel Towers on North Main Street. In all, more than 1,000 units of city housing are administered by the authority.

## Is Poverty Industry Part of a True Growth Plan

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**Anna Howard**

While city hall top salaries have risen more than 35 per cent and casino cash was abused and the Dyster administration has ridden roughshod over residents and wasted taxpayer dollars a Poverty Development Plan has gone ahead full speed under the guise of economic development.

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster has produced and cited any number of "plans" for the city either in whole or by city district. Historic and business and entertainment district etc. We do not recall him ever citing a "social and addictive services business development plan" or related zoning regulations. Yet he salts these facilities throughout the city...where is the plan or the planning regulations? Does anyone believe these social service businesses are complimentary to parallel development such as retail, hotels, tourism...not to mention home ownership and quality of life?

This administration has made Niagara Falls the dumping ground for welfare recipients, sex offenders, drug and alcohol addicted, the poor, homeless, subsidized housing and its housing recipients. It can't be an accident that this is happening this way.

The train station was, curiously, built in the north section of the city. No one has ever quite understood why it was built there. We wonder if it was built right there for a reason. And the reason is that once operating it will be a direct transportation feeder for the unemployed, the welfare seeker, the out of the area drug addict seeking treatment facilities and so on. "Give them a ticket and send them to Niagara Falls" will be the motto as social service agencies and law enforcement from across the state send their troubled people

here...all causing the local poverty industry to grow even more. Does that mean the station hasn't got a tourism element? No but it has a critical poverty industry transportation element also. Consider the critical mass of poverty offices and agencies in the city...it needs to be fed and supported.

Consider the following projects:

- Hope VI
- South Junior housing project
- Low income housing on Sixth
- The Horizons addiction treatment center moving into the former Fichte eye center at 24th and Pine
- A methadone treatment center for Walnut and Sixth
- Bettered women's shelter on 6th
- Shelter for children on Cedar Ave.
- Family and Children's Services offices on Main Street.
- YMCA homeless shelter
- Gospel Mission on Ferry Ave
- Parole office on Third St.
- Sex offenders
- And Dyster has asked for Syrian refugees

I believe the poverty industry growth been planned on multiple government levels all along and this explains the fast track of projects in the city and the city hall "hands off" approach with regard to zoning. Behind the scenes the city has been identified as a poverty center and Dyster is working hard every day to make it happen. You may recall the rumors of Dyster meeting with county social services in secret with regard to the Y homeless shelter project. Were there similar secret meetings with regards to the overall poverty industry in the city?



# Hard Ball Questions We Would Ask Dyster If He Appeared On Our Talk Show

**Anna Howard**



Niagara Falls Mayor Paul A. Dyster appeared on the Tom Darro radio show Wednesday December 16, and while both he and the host spoke for one hour, little was learned as to how the mayor intends to handle the many serious problems confronting the city.

Little was learned because little in the area of hard questioning took place.

But we have questions of our own that we wouldn't hesitate to ask if the mayor would sit for an interview with the Reporter. Such as:

The Hamister contract was signed over 25 months ago and still there's no shovel in the ground. Is the project you hyped for the past two election cycles the complete failure it appears to be?

You failed to receive a minority of votes

(47%) in the election. Do you see this voter rejection as a rejection of your last two terms?

The council and your office worked to pass the 2016 budget when, for lack of better words, little public input or new coverage on November 17. Why the lack of stakeholder debate?

The city's Finance Advisory Panel released their long awaited budget recommenda-

tions AFTER you signed the 2016 budget. Why did you allow the panel's critical document to fall out of sync with your 2016 budget authorization?

You have expressed interest in pursuing a city property reassessment for 2016. Why do you see a reassessment and tax hike as a better solution than curbing your administration's spending?

You, as gatekeeper of the casino cash, have spent or committed all of the casino cash into the foreseeable future, and you did it all without a published spending plan. Why?

Senator Rob Ortt recently released an ambitious plan to increase the city's share of casino cash. Why haven't you embraced the senator's plan? Do you have a better plan?

What is the city's current relationship with the NYS Municipal Restructuring Board and how will that relationship affect residents?

The state audit of city finances revealed improper use of casino funds to cover the deficit, misdirected millions within the budget and more than \$1 million unaccounted for. What do you say about these findings?

The 2016 budget, at your recommendation, is using \$12.5 million of casino revenue to operate. How do you justify this in light of the state audit that condemned this as misuse of casino funds?

The city debt under your leadership has risen to more than \$61 million. Can a city this size handle debt of this magnitude?

Have you found the money to annually operate the train station? How much money will it cost to keep the train station doors open?

The ice pavilion "renovation" has risen in cost to more than three times the original estimate. How did this happen?

## Two Methadone Clinics to Address Rising Problem of Heroin Addiction

**Mike Hudson**

"When one door closes, another door opens," Alexander Graham Bell once famously said and, when it comes to the problem of drug addiction in Niagara Falls, his words ring true today.

When the elderly Dr. Pravin Mehta was arrested at his Pine Avenue office by a combined task force of balaclava clad federal state and local police in January 2011, it was said that the oxycodone, Xanax and other prescription opiates he dispensed like candy constituted the city's biggest drug problem.

Mehta, one of the first doctors charged in the recent rash of prescription pill cases, pleaded guilty in federal court on May 13 to handing out illegal pain medication from late 2007 to early 2011 when he was arrested.

Now 77, he will face nearly six years in prison when he is sentenced in the coming months by U.S. District Judge William M. Skretny.

Mehta, who police claim was known as "Dr. Feel Good" on the streets, also admitted signing blank prescription forms and directing a staff member, in his absence, to fill out the

rest of the forms.

He was originally charged in a 28-count federal indictment in 2011 but ended up pleading guilty to a single count of conspiracy to distribute oxycodone and other controlled substances.

"Mehta created a culture of drug abuse that the City of Niagara Falls has never seen before," Niagara Falls Police Sup. Bryan Dal-Porto said.

Since Mehta's operation was shut down, a new drug scourge has hit the streets here. The problem of heroin addiction has become so acute, officials say, that not one but two methadone treatment centers are now needed here, where none existed previously.

Horizon Health Services, one of the region's leading providers of drug detox, behavioral health and vocational services has acquired a former eye care facility in Niagara Falls that it plans to renovate and reopen as its newest location.

Horizon paid \$360,000 for the 5,800-square-foot building at 2400 Pine Ave., along with two adjacent lots, totaling just under one acre. The property had been owned by Claus and Gerry Fichte, who leased it to Fichte Endl

& Elmer Eyecare.

For Horizon, the vacated space provided an opportunity to grow, said Anne Constantino, CEO. "The former Fichte location is perfect for us as it has access from public transportation, lots of parking and room for building expansion," she said.

And over on 6th Street and Walnut Avenue, the Northpointe Council is hoping to make the old school district administration building the home for its methadone maintenance program.

Northpointe's President and CEO Daniel Shubsda.

"The new location would provide treatment to individuals and families affected by chemical dependency," an October letter from Northpointe's President and CEO Daniel Shubsda stated. "Services would include outpatient counseling services and methadone treatment for addictions."

City Council Chairman Andrew Touma said he was unaware of Northpointe's interest in the site until last week. There is an "obvious need" for the clinic in the city, Touma said.

"I certainly hope the public would have a part in this," he said. "That's all I ask for, some

input and some opportunity for the residents to have input too."

As for subsequent approvals for Northpointe's outpatient services, Senior City Planner Tom DeSantis said the property is zoned commercially, permitting the construction of a methadone clinic, and therefore cannot be legally blocked if it is the intention of a developer.

"This is something that we ruled on two months ago," DeSantis said. "The use is allowable in that district, so it doesn't require planning board approval."

Northpointe, a registered charity organization in the state, lists Craig Johnson, corporation counsel for the city, and Charles Walker, a sitting councilman, as members of its governing board.

The rapidly expanding human services sector in Niagara Falls is fast becoming the city's growth industry. The location of two methadone treatment centers in the city will undoubtedly aid many poor unfortunates locked in the grip of heroin addiction to the population here, and provide living wage jobs – as the politicians would say – for those involved in their treatment.

## Elusive City Engineer Job Description Absent From City's Official Website

**Mike Hudson**

The help wanted advertisement the Dyster administration ran in the Buffalo News and on a popular job seeking website in an apparent attempt to find a new city engineer contained a link to the city's own website, niagarafall-susa.org. Potential city engineers were directed to the website where, it was promised, there would be a "full job description."

Admittedly, none of us here at the Niagara Falls Reporter are licensed engineers, but repeated attempts by several top staffers to locate this promised job description were doomed to failure.

It simply isn't there.

We started off by going to the "See Employment Opportunities" icon in the left hand column of the cover page. Because, obviously, that's where it would be, right?

Wrong. There are no current job openings

listed. There are two promotional exams coming up, for a battalion fire chief and a principal account clerk, but those exams may only be taken by current city employees looking to work their way up.

Where to next? Looking over to the right hand side of the cover page we saw an icon that said "City Departments." Clicking on that brings them all up and, since the advertisement had listed the Human Resources Dept. and its director, Ruby Pulliam, we thought we'd try there.

Beneath a very nice though somewhat smallish photograph of Ms. Pulliam standing in front of a flag in what looked to be the city Council Chambers was the HR Department's mission statement.

"The goal of this department is to insure compliance with all mandated requirements, maintaining good employee relations through fair and equitable treatment of all employees,

and encouraging an environment in which employees can maximize their potential, resulting in a higher level of service to the public," it said. We were duly impressed.

But try as we might we couldn't find any mention of the increasingly mysterious city engineer job description.

Back to "City Departments" we trudged. What could we be missing here? Of course! It almost jumped right off the screen at us. "Engineering Department." How could we have been so stupid?

We clicked the icon and immediately discovered that there are 10 employees in the engineering department, 10 employees who more often than not during the eight years of Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster's reign have not had an immediate supervisor.

We also found out a little bit about what they do all day.

"The City of Niagara Falls Engineering

Department is dedicated to providing professional, well-organized, and cost effective municipal engineering services to the citizens of Niagara Falls, as well as other Departments of the City," the overview read. "Our efforts are focused on providing a high level of expertise for designing/planning, advising, administering, and overseeing all public works improvements and right of ways. Our goal is to provide these services within the project budget and timeframe required while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare of the Citizens of Niagara Falls."

When we clicked on current projects – we found that it has not been updated since 2011.

What we couldn't find – once again – was the elusive city engineer job description promised in the help wanted ads.

Finally, we just gave up, as will, perhaps, any number of potential city engineers.

It's almost like it was designed that way.



# King Con Shmuel Shmueli Learns New Trade: Stiffing Lawyers and Winning Through Losing --Lawsuits

## Frank Parlato

We've previously written in this series that while living in Brooklyn Shmuel Shmueli started a Hebrew newspaper, Israel Shelanu (Our Israel), and instead of hiring reporters, he found it convenient to "lift" stories from other Hebrew newspapers without their permission.

Haaretz Daily, Maariv Modiin and Shalom sued him for copyright infringement. He countersued for \$158 million claiming the three newspapers were in a conspiracy against him.

They won. He lost. A \$24 million judgment was entered against Shmueli. He declared bankruptcy.

But he learned a lesson. Win or lose it does not matter. Just don't pay! Anybody.

He had hired three sets of lawyers to defend him in the copyright infringement suit and when he discharged the newspapers' judgment in bankruptcy, he discharged his lawyers' fees too. Shmueli learned if you game the system rightly, there is no punishment; you just extend your game.

### STAY BUT DON'T PAY

We also reported how Shmueli bought a home in Brooklyn and sold it to his wife; who sold it back to him who sold it back to his wife who sold it to their daughter – each time raising the purchase price and securing a larger sum of mortgage money. The daughter finally sold the house to Jacob and Eva Fuhrman for \$480,000. When the Fuhrmans tried to move in, Shmueli told the couple he had a lease signed by his daughter so he didn't have to move out.

The Fuhrmans took Shmueli to court. Shmueli countersued and stayed in the home - for free - while the Fuhrmans paid attorneys to get him out. When federal marshals came to remove him, he was already gone. He forgot nothing but his garbage and to say goodbye to creditors.

Sure, the court ordered a judgment against Shmueli to reimburse the Fuhrmans' legal fees. But Shmueli discharged that \$56,669 judgment in bankruptcy.

Add it up: Shmueli, who lost the case, got \$480,000 from the sale; got to live in the house for free for months; and did not have to pay to dispose of his trash to leave the sold house "broom swept" clean and did not pay Fuhrman's legal fees.

Despite the official verdict, Shmueli won, Fuhrmans lost.

### SHMUELI DISCOVERS NIAGARA FALLS AND A NEW CAREER

In 1999, Hong Kong businessman David Ho commenced a development in Niagara Falls called AquaFalls at the site of the old Occidental Chemical headquarters across from the Niagara Falls State Park. Ho's planned underground aquarium failed and, on the eve of foreclosure I formed a company partnership with Ho and rescued the property.

The new company was called One Niagara, and was to gather a critical mass of vendors to provide food, tours, parking and retail offerings for tourists. Ho and I signed an operating agreement that gave me "full and exclusive right to control day to day operations and business affairs of the Company .... en-



itled to take any and all actions with respect to the Property ... without any further confirmation or approval of (David Ho)."

In short, I was the boss and, in return, I had to fund the losses, make the cash calls; Ho was not required to and never did invest a dime in our project. When the business was losing money, Ho was content to allow me to invest money and run operations. Once it

veered toward success, he no longer liked the idea of me having control. That's when Ho introduced Shmueli, who he declared was his agent; then Ho left for Hong Kong never to return.

Shmueli quickly and enthusiastically embraced his new role as Ho's agent. On August 16, 2007, while I was out of town, Shmueli called a meeting (with himself and

a stenographer) where he demoted me to superintendent of buildings and grounds, appointed himself manager, and passed a resolution (voted on only by him) that a locksmith change the locks. The following day he went to the tenant vendors and instructed them on how to pay the rent.

On August 30, I went before State Supreme Court Justice Frank Caruso and won a restraining order preventing Shmueli from changing the locks or holding himself out as manager until a hearing could be held. Shmueli retained the law firm of Lorenzo and Cohen LLP, headed by prominent local attorney Steven Cohen.

### DUTIES OF ATTORNEYS AND CLIENTS LIKE SHMUELI

Every attorney is bound to one day get a client who lies. Whether civil or criminal, clients present their side of the story, often with embellishments favoring their viewpoint. Shmueli took this to the level of an art form.

An attorney, on the other hand, has a duty to tell his client the truth and to – in general – believe and fight for his client. In this respect, Steve Cohen has few peers in this community.

But, Shmueli put Cohen at a disadvantage since he misled Cohen, as is evidenced by documents that emerged through discovery and by the fact that Shmueli lost the case. But that came later.

Initially, Shmueli tried to micromanage the case – from Hong Kong. On Jan. 23, 2008, he faxed a lengthy handwritten letter to Cohen. On Jan. 25, he sent a typed version of the same letter along with clarifications in bold. In this letter Shmueli says he has plans to build a high-rise hotel and develop a Chinese exhibition in Niagara Falls.

This was part of Shmueli's ruse: to pretend great friendship, feign deep religious feelings, promise big things in the future and, in this instance, pretend David Ho was a billionaire who had a Chinese board of directors which Shmueli answered to.

None of it was true.

While Ho had some money, he was not a billionaire; he could not even finance his aquarium project and almost lost the property to foreclosure. There was no Chinese board of directors. There was no planned Chinese exhibition and no high-rise hotel.

Whether Shmueli was a man of deep religious principles we will leave that for the reader to judge.

Here are some excerpts of his letters to Cohen.

"Dear Steve

".... We have a plan to build a hotel.... As a close friend and my lawyer I thought that you will be very happy to hear that something is cooking. (Group of investors interesting to build hi-rise hotel in N.F. which I may represent them in N.F.).... Please keep .... very confidential!

"Clarification: I don't want that the Chinese Exhibition and the hotel issues will be notified to anybody yet (outside of your law firm)....

"Clarification: I wanted to digest with you personally, when I will arrive to N.F. all details of the above and all of its possible im-

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# Remarkable career shows how to game system

plications.”

After mentioning the big plans, Shmueli tries to amend the terms of the retainer agreement with Cohen. Instead of paying in a timely fashion, Shmueli wanted to make a partial payment then postpone payments until completion of the case.

“You wrote that the balance due is \$39,303.41 (by August 17, 2008).... Nevertheless I convinced the B.O.D. (Board of Directors) ... not to request any changes beside one which they insisted to: the words ‘August 17 2008’ will be corrected to – ‘the duration of the IIL case’”.

As Shmueli sought to modify the retainer, he continued to write to Cohen, nurturing their friendship as he tried to connive him out of fees.

Based on documents in the possession of this publication, it seems Shmueli may have already collected or planned to collect money from Ho meant for the lawyers which Shmueli planned to keep for himself.

Shmueli again wrote to Cohen:

“My dear friend,

“.... As you know I always helped you to the maximum of my availably (to the merit and financially). Here we have a big fruitful future for us if you will understand my limitations as just a member of IIL [Ho’s company, Incredible Investments LTD] and its proxy in U.S.A. but not as a member in the B.O.D. .... My dear friend, Steve, in lite of all... the facts detailed to you in my memos to you in the past .... Please allow me to send you a wire of \$40,000 now! (and the remaining \$70,000 in the future as we progress in the case).

“Please notified your acceptance of this letter and its details, and fax me the instruction to which account to wire you \$40,000 now!

“Best regards,

“Samuel (Sam) Shmueli For and on behalf of IIL

c.c. ... Mr. David Ho The Board of Directors of ILL”

In response, Cohen sent Shmueli a fax on Jan. 26, 2008, laying out some terms for an intelligent attorney-client relationship.

Shmueli wrote back,

“Dear Steven,

“... I fully accept your proposal of working ... as you described in your said fax message... ‘My input would be limited primarily to strategies or ends’.... I would leave the procedural work to your firm commenting on same only if my silence would cause me to ‘explode’ (due to its possible

major errors, factual mistakes or its strategic implications)....”

Still trying to get Cohen to accept \$40,000 and not any more money until the case was completed, Shmueli continued:

“The total flat grand budget for the case herein, including disbursements, is \$150,000 until completion.... \$40,000 will be wired now as per acceptance of this letter, and the remaining \$70,000 will be paid thru the duration of the case until completion.

“....I am not a lawyer, and never predicted to be as such ... But as a dear friend .... what is my opinion in this case of what is the meaning of: ‘completion of the case’ :.... The bottom line is simple.... To get F.P. (Frank Parlato) out of management position in One Niagara Building....

“My dear friend, The bottom line is: if David (Ho) will ‘smell real progress’ .... we can get very soon to the next stage of additional fee agreement....”

In court, however, the smell of real

progress was elusive. Shmueli lost.

Without getting into the finer details of how Shmueli’s deception of his attorney backfired – he misled Cohen on the priority of contracts between Ho and myself, inverting the superseding contract with the earlier, obsolete agreement – it caused the case to implode.

Instead of removing me as the manager of One Niagara, on May 20, 2008, Judge Caruso issued an injunction barring Shmueli from interfering with my management and affirming that I was – by virtue of the true contract - the sole manager of One Niagara.

Undaunted by the loss, Shmueli, having a knack for hiring superb attorneys, (then misleading them, picking a fight with them when they inevitably lose [because they were misled] then not paying them in full and deceptively keeping a portion of the money his investors intended for legal fees) retained the Buffalo law firm of Zdarsky, Sawicki & Agostinelli - with Joseph E. Zdarsky and

David E. Gutowski as lead attorneys – to appeal the Caruso decision.

Now it was time for Shmueli to pick a fight with Cohen.

He wrote to Cohen on July 15, 2008, “Despite numerous phone calls and faxes, I didn’t receive responses to the actual issues detailed in my 5 pages typed letter to you dated JULY/2/08.... The BOD is not giving me any more room for ‘adjustments’ with your firm.... This is a last call. I can’t hold ... the BOD horses any more, I gave you all the ‘credit’ possible to correct your acts....

“I already lost their trust on you and your firm.... I am sorry that you brought our business relationship to such a dark corner in such a critical time for IIL. Please use the next 24 hours to cure the situation.”

But the situation was not cured.

Cohen had a response for Shmueli; so did Zdarsky in time, and it wasn’t pretty.

To be continued.

## Fed Hikes Key Interest Rate For First Time in Nearly a Decade

The Federal Reserve this week raised its benchmark short-term interest rate for the first time in 9 1/2 years.

Seven years after lowering the rate to near zero, members of the policy-making Federal Open Market Committee edged it up 0.25 percentage point.

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**\$2.99 Kid's Buffet**

Ages 4-7

Ages 8 - 12 : \$4.99  
Limit 2 per Adult meal purchase at regular price.

**PONDEROSA**

Expires: 12/31/15

Cannot be used in combination with any other coupon, discount or promotional offer. Tax not included. Dine-in only. Valid upto party of 6 at participating Steakhouses.

**\$5.99 Lunch Buffet** **\$8.99 Dinner Buffet**

Lunch valid Mon-Fri: 11am - 4pm,  
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**PONDEROSA**

Expires: 12/31/15

Cannot be used in combination with any other coupon, discount or promotional offer. Tax not included. Valid for up to party of 6 at participating Steakhouses.

**FREE Soda Pop**

On purchase of adult lunch or dinner buffet at regular price.

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# **WINTER TERM 2015**

## **Classes begin Jan 11, 2016**

(We are starting the Monday before Martin Luther King Day)

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The Niagara Falls City School District is committed to life-long learning and through the Community Education Center offers programs for people of all ages. Our course list contains opportunities for participation in activities that promote physical fitness, the use of technology and other special interests during the Winter Term of 2016.

Please note that we are interested in expanding the number of future course offerings and invite community experts who are willing to share their expertise to contact the Community Education Center.

Registration begins on December 21, 2015. If you have any questions, or would like more information about a specific program, please call us at 716-286-0771.

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# NIAGARA FALLS COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER

Erica Kopp  
Stephanie Bevacqua

Call for information: 716-278-8154  
Call for information: 716-286-0768

## DAILY PROGRAMS O/N BOCES

**\*\*There are no fees for these programs.**

### **\*\*ADULT BASIC EDUCATION / HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY**



This course is designed for the adult learner interested in completing their High School Equivalency diploma. It is also recommended for anyone who has been away from school for a long period of time or for those who feel they need prior preparation for the TASC Exam. The course reviews the basics of Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Reading. Applications are available at the Community Education Center. The course and TASC exam are free of charge. New York State has selected a new high school equivalency test called the TASC™ to replace the GED® as the primary pathway to a NYS High School Equivalency Diploma.

Monday through Friday 8:30 -11:30 am or 12:00 - 3:00 pm

Monday & Thursday 5:00 – 8:00 pm

Stephanie Bevacqua Call for information: 716-286-0768

### **\*\*ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR THE FOREIGN BORN**

Developed for the adult learner to read and speak the English Language.

Monday through Thursday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm or 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Joan Caldwell /Ibrahim Shakoar. Call for information: 716-286-0772

### **\*\*NATIONAL EXTERNAL DIPLOMA PROGRAM (NEDP)**

This is a non-instructional program that incorporates a variety of assessment techniques, which are designed for the adult learner who has acquired academic skills through life experiences. The techniques include home projects, performance assessments, interviewing and documentation review. NEDP provides competent adults with the opportunity to earn a regular, High School diploma.

Qualifications: 21 years and older.

### **CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT PROGRAM**



The program consists of ten weeks of instructional classes held at the Niagara Falls City School District Community Education Center. You will receive a New York State certification upon successful completion of the program.

Cost to be determined.

Qualifications: 21 years and older with **no high school diploma**

Terry Josker Call for information: 716-731-4176 ext. 4445

### **HHA – HOME HEALTH AIDE**

A one month program (4-5 weeks) of 105 clinical hours (75 hrs theory class and 30 hrs clinical) with a final exam. Students become trained and certified health-care worker who provides assistance to a patient in the home with personal care (as hygiene and exercise) and light household duties (as meal preparation) and who monitors a patient's condition.

Contact: Tanya Moore @ 278-8599 or

Terry Joshker @ 731-4176 ext. 4445

## SPECIAL INTERESTS

### **INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTERS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**





# NIAGARA FALLS COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER

If learning how to use a computer is something you have been putting off, this is the class for you! This class is designed as an introduction to computers for beginning students ...like you! Class starts with "Here's the on button." You will become familiar with the very basics that include parts of the computer, how to use the mouse, games, searching the Internet & email. Class size will be limited to a small group for more one-on-one help and instruction. (Maximum of 7, minimum of 5 students required for each class.)  
*Carol Hartwig CEC 205 6 weeks, Tues. Jan. 12 – Feb. 23 3:00-5:00 pm \$45.00*



## CROCHET CLASS



Do you hate cold winters? Do you want to learn a way to pass the time that will help keep you warm throughout those long cold days? If you answered "Yes" to these questions then grab your crochet hook and come learn to crochet. We will make squares of different

stitches and put them together to make a lap-ghan to help keep you warm! The supplies needed are: 1 crochet hook Size H & 4 skeins (7 oz) of your favorite colored worsted weight yarn.  
*Christine Goodwin CEC; Tuesdays, beginning Jan. 12th , 6:00 – 7:30 pm \$45.00*

|                        |                 |                         |                |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Susana Nicholas        | CEC Pool        | Mon 10:00-11:00 am      | \$30.00        |
| Susana Nicholas        | CEC Pool        | Mon 11:00-12:00 pm      | \$30.00        |
| <b>Susana Nicholas</b> | <b>CEC Pool</b> | <b>Mon 6:00-7:00 pm</b> | <b>\$30.00</b> |
| Susana Nicholas        | CEC Pool        | Tues 9:00-10:00 am      | \$30.00        |
| Susana Nicholas        | CEC Pool        | Tues 10:00-11:00 am     | \$30.00        |
| Susana Nicholas        | CEC Pool        | Wed 11:00-12:00 pm      | \$30.00        |
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| Susana Nicholas        | CEC Pool        | Thurs 9:00-10:00 am     | \$30.00        |
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## WATERWALKING

Exercise your entire body with added benefit of water resistance. One-half hour equals two hours of street walking. (Limit 10)  
*Susana Nicholas CEC Pool Mon. Noon-1 pm \$30.00*  
*Susana Nicholas CEC Pool Wed. Noon-1 pm \$30.00*

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### TOTAL BODY WORKOUT

Fitness program targeting upper and lower body, abs, legs and buttocks – plus cardiovascular workout (bring hand weights).  
*Susana Nicholas CEC (60th St.) Gym Tues & Thurs 6:00-7:00 pm \$45.00*

### CHAIR EXERCISES FOR SENIORS



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*Susana Nicholas CEC (60th St.) Gym Wed. 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. \$25.00*

# NIAGARA FALLS COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER



# REGISTRATION

The Winter Term begins January 11, 2016. Classes are held for 10 consecutive weeks unless otherwise noted. Classes will not be held on:

Monday, Jan. 18, 2016 – Dr. Martin Luther King Day  
Monday, Feb. 15, 2016 – Presidents' Day

Registration by mail is preferred and will only be accepted with a postmark PRIOR to the start of classes from December 21, 2015 – January 8, 2016. There will be no registration on the first day of class. Please make checks or money orders payable to: Niagara Falls City School District

**NO CASH WILL BE ACCEPTED & there is a \$30.00 charge for returned checks**

**Please forward registration and payment to:**

**Niagara Falls Community Education Center**  
**ATTN: Vicki Johnstone-Graf**  
6040 Lindbergh Avenue  
Niagara Falls, New York 14304

**You may register in person from December 21, 2015 through January 8, 2016 in the Community Education Center Main Office from 9:00 am – 2:30 pm.**

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**NIAGARA FALLS COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER**



# Cult of NXIVM Series Part 5: Bronfman Sisters Join NXIVM and Lose Millions of Dollars

**Frank Parlato**

It's worth noting that well before I was hired as a consultant at NXIVM in 2007, the two Seagram heiresses, Clare and Sarah Bronfman lost a staggering amount of money.

In 2002, after joining the "self-help" company NXIVM, which critics call a cult, the Bronfman sisters became enamored with NXIVM founder, Keith Raniere, and his top assistant, Nancy Salzman, president of NXIVM.

They expressed their infatuation as one might expect heiresses would: They gave him money.

It began modestly and gradually increased. The sisters donated \$250,000 to advance Raniere's ideals. Out of that \$250,000, Raniere got a gift of a \$40,000 piano.

Salzman wanted a new home. Clare Bronfman bought her old home and moved into it. The sisters then spent close to \$1 million to buy Salzman a new home in Halfmoon, a suburb of Albany.

Clare bought a \$2.3 million, 234-acre horse farm with a manor house, outside Albany, that NXIVM would use to house potential NXIVM customers and VIPs.

The sisters paid \$11 million for a 22-seat private jet that Raniere and Salzman would use.

Sara bought a \$6.5 million apartment in the Trump International Hotel & Tower in Manhattan that Salzman would use when she came to New York City.

The sisters "lent" \$1.7 million to buy NXIVM's new headquarters on 455 New Karner Road in Colonie, NY. It is unclear whether that "loan" was paid back or only "papered" as a loan to disguise the fact that it was a gift.

The sisters purchased for Raniere and Salzman 17 residential and commercial properties in the Albany region, paying \$4.4 million for the properties, under a corporation Raniere controlled in Salzman's name called NXIVM Properties LLC.

According to a deposition given by NXIVM member, Barbara J. Bouchey, a New York State licensed financial planner, Raniere, "felt the government was watching him [and] he needed to be careful" so he took "precautions to not have his name on things, not have a driver's license."

Raniere also encouraged, she said, "a number of people [to] get off the grid, meaning not have a tax ID number, not to file their tax returns."

The sisters took out a line of credit to "loan" NXIVM another \$2 million, repayable through personal training sessions from Salzman, and for Salzman to be available to take phone calls from Clare. Clare was to be billed \$2000 per hour for these sessions with Salzman. It is unclear if the loan was repaid and/or whether Salzman reported the income to the IRS from her \$2000 per hour sessions with Clare.

From January 2005 to late 2007, Raniere, allegedly, made a series of commodity trades through First Principles, a company registered in Salzman's name.



**Sara and Clare Bronfman, with their Seagram's millions, walk in front of Keith Raniere's shadow. Sketch courtesy the New York Observer.**

Raniere, who reportedly claimed he has a 240 IQ, and is one of, if not the smartest man in the world, said he developed a mathematical formula to consistently beat the commodities market. Raniere employed a commodities broker named Yuri Plyam who operated his own brokerage firm, Castle Trading, in Los Angeles.

Raniere's system did not work.

Within two years, Raniere lost (or claimed to have lost) \$69 million in commodities — and asked the Bronfmans to cover \$65.6 million of it, which they did.

Clare Bronfman, in testimony in a Washington trial, refused to acknowledge she covered Raniere's commodities losses. However the Bronfman sisters filed complaints with the National Futures Association and the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission against the broker, Plyam (Case 1:12-cv-00252-GLS-ATB Document 1-1 Filed 02/09/12). Both of these complaints were denied because the Bronfman sisters never had any trading accounts with Plyam.

Their former consultant, Joseph O'Hara, explained in court filings, "the Bronfman sisters 'loaned' approximately Sixty-five Million Dollars (\$65,000,000) to First Principles, Inc. in order to cover Raniere's losses in the commodities account that had been established in that entity's name."

Bronfman's lawyer, Robert Crockett, told the Albany Times Union (Jan 31 2010) that the Bronfman sisters, not Raniere, made the commodities investments, by loaning the \$65.6 million to First Principles LLC, whose sole stockholder was Salzman.

"Mr. Raniere was giving the Bronfmans advice on what positions to take with their money," Crockett told the Times Union.

Regardless of the legal structure — or even if the commodities investments were ever actually made — the so-called "loan" was never repaid.

Bronfman financial statements which I



**The Bronfman sisters "loaned" \$1.7 million to NXIVM to buy property on New Karner Road for their training and office headquarters (above) in suburban Albany. The doors are kept locked. No one is allowed in unless approved by Keith Raniere.**



**Fall gal? NXIVM president Nancy Salzman may be on the hook for much of the financial dealings Raniere orchestrated in her name.**



**Yuri Plyam, a commodities broker, partnered with Keith Raniere to "guide" the Bronfman sisters in commodities investments. The sisters lost (were swindled out of?) \$65.6 million.**

reviewed reveal the sisters booked the \$65.6 million as a loan, going so far as to include interest payments which they did not receive. Clare Bronfman told me she and her sister reported "phantom" interest income on tax returns.

She claimed the purpose of the deception was to make it appear she was earning money on the \$65.6 million to hide the commodities losses from her father, billionaire, Edgar Bronfman Sr., and trustees charged with safeguarding the sisters' trust fund. Reporting phantom interest may also have saved the sisters millions in gift taxes, but was possibly tax evasion.

O'Hara, who quit NXIVM because of concerns about their potentially illegal activities, had another view. In court filings he wrote, "Although much of this funding has been labeled as 'loans' for accounting and tax purposes, there is, in fact, no reasonable expectation that any of these funds will ever be repaid — and, as a result, all of it should be treated as taxable income with respect to the entities that received same."

Salzman's role is also unclear. When I questioned her she evidently did not know much, if anything, about the actual commodities trading or how and where \$65.6 million of Bronfman money was lost, yet her name was on the corporate entity that al-

legedly made the investments.

For Raniere's inner circle, the losses were of concern — especially to the Bronfman's financial advisor, Bouchey, who, at the time, was also one of Raniere's girlfriends.

The Bronfmans were running out of money and to cover the (alleged) commodities losses they needed their father to allow them to borrow from their future inheritance.

"At one point," Bouchey said in a deposition shortly after she left NXIVM, "when the commodities losses were really great the girls went to their father and asked their father if they could take \$20 million out of this trust and they would pay it back. In fact, I went with them to Citibank and we negotiated a Citibank line of credit of \$20 million for Clare and \$20 million for Sara. And their father gave permission for them to use the trust that they would inherit when their father died as collateral to cover for the Citibank, the two \$20 million lines of credit. And, some \$40 million was used to give to Keith to cover some losses on the commodities."

They also secured a loan against the jet.

Bouchey recalled in court filings, "I also went down with Sara to New York City to Citibank to negotiate a plane loan for eleven or twelve million dollars. And that money

*(Continued on page 16)*



# Cult leader guides heiresses out of millions

(Continued from page 15)

was needed as well to help cover for the losses Keith occurred with the commodities....

"Sara and Clare's father was very concerned at this point, as were the trustees, because when we went and got the \$20 million each at Citibank and then requested \$20 million to come out of the trust they were very anxious to have that money go back into the trust.

"And I remember myself and Sara, Clare, and Nancy all having conversations with Keith because Keith — every time we would send him money Keith would assure us: This is it. This is it; there won't be any more. It's going to come back. I promise you it's going to come back. Things are going to turn around. They were also panicked; is this money going to come back?

"But the trustees for the father's account were very upset about this. And, so, there were a lot of conversations with Keith because every day I was calling and saying: Are you going to get the \$20 million back? Are you going to get the \$20 million back? And every day he was like working on it.

"Now, that \$20 million did come back and went into the father's trust, but not the forty million in the Citibank line of credit. So, the sixty-five million never came back."

Raniere, offering an explanation why his mathematical commodities formula

failed, told the Bronfman sisters that the loss of their \$65.6 million was caused by "conspiracies" between the commodities clearing firm and their father, Edgar Bronfman Sr.

As Bouchey recalled, Raniere put a positive spin on this. He "was learning about moving money around," Bouchey said in court filings. "And Keith wanted to have our own country, our own currency and market, our own way of doing things. So he needed to learn how the cheaters in the world markets worked. And he was learning this great body of knowledge about the world that would serve him well."

Still, his inner circle was having a hard time dealing with the losses.

Salzman "was really panicking because she was liable and felt responsible for being the one to ask the girls for the money quite often," Bouchey recalled in her deposition. "... And, there were other people, Karen Unterreiner, Lauren Salzman. There were a number of us aware of what was going on. We were all panicking. Sixty-five million dollars of losses in commodities is nothing to sneeze at."

Bouchey added, "Keith never admitted that his math formula and commodities knowledge was lousy and that he was irresponsible with the money and/or that he didn't know how to trade and handle himself well in commodities. I never heard him say that once. It was always a plot against him and what he was doing.... I panicked and



Licensed financial planner, Barbara Bouchey (above) left NXIVM and spilled the beans on Raniere.



Keith Raniere, 2009

told him, 'You have got to stop this stuff. This is crazy.'"

The Bronfmans however believed Raniere's explanation.

Clare Bronfman told me she believed her father manipulated the commodities market through buying opposing positions in orange juice futures — which caused Raniere's

otherwise sound mathematical formula to fail.

I asked Clare if she had any documents to prove Raniere, Salzman, or the broker, Plyam, actually invested her money in commodities. She said, no, she did not.

I asked Clare if she ever spoke to her father about his foiling Raniere's investments.

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# Gullible heiresses blame billionaire father



Keith Raniere claimed that Edgar Bronfman (above left) was secretly behind Raniere's losses of the Bronfman sister's money in the commodities market. While it is unknown if there were any actual losses or just plain swindling by Raniere, one thing is clear, the Bronfman sisters trusted Raniere enough to "loan" him \$66.6 million which he claimed to have lost in commodities.

She said she never spoke of the matter with her father but expressed guilt about what her father had done to Raniere.

The losses, although claimed by Raniere to be not his fault, nevertheless had to be kept secret from Raniere's students because, as Bouchee pointed out, "What would the NXIVM community think if they found out that the leader of the mission was irrespon-

sibly gambling millions and millions and millions of dollars and losing it? This would shake the confidence of many people. So, we all, you know, like were afraid to talk to anybody about this going on because it looked crazy. And it was crazy."

Soon after losing \$65.6 million in commodities – Raniere and Plyam planned to diversify into real estate development. Raniere



The Bronfman sisters.

encouraged the Bronfmans to invest \$26 million with Plyam in a housing construction project in Los Angeles. The plan was to build multimillion-dollar homes on lots scattered across Los Angeles County – significantly, as Plyam told me, located south of Wilshire Blvd., in East and West Hollywood Hills, Woodland Hills, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Studio City, Laurel Canyon, and Benedict Canyon.

After I learned about the commodities losses, I was asked to become involved with the Los Angeles real estate investment and quickly discovered fraud by Plyam. I stopped the wholesale stripping by Plyam of the Bronfman sisters' fortune within days of finding out.

However, when I started asking questions about Raniere's role in the Los Angeles investment, both Raniere and the Bronfmans cut off communications with me.

It is only a matter of time – if it has not occurred already – when federal agents will turn their attention to Raniere – and in a dark twist – his victim cum potential coconspirator, Clare Bronfman.

As former NXIVM inner circle member Kristin Keffe said, "Clare can serve time; she's going to be on the hook for everything criminal that NXIVM did because of her part in it. .... And, she completely comingled her personal expenses with the NXIVM Corporation, and First Principles, so there's going to be no corporate veil of protection."

Bouchee, who left NXIVM in the wake

of my discovery of fraud by Plyam, and possibly Raniere, claims that Clare Bronfman and Raniere had "two sets of books". Court records show Bouchee possesses some 17 boxes of documents – duplicates of records she preserved as part of her duties as the Bronfmans' financial advisor. There are 16 sets of books in QuickBooks, she says, and evidence of illegal activities including a conspiracy to forge documents.

Keffe also claims that Raniere had more than \$2 million in cash stored at Salzmann's house in a basement safe.

"You just have a whole criminal enterprise. There was fraud on every f—g level," Keffe said.

In part 6 of the Cult of NXIVM series, I will show why I believe this is true.



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## Cohen to Represent Mascia at Hearing

### Tony Farina

Joe Mascia, the elected tenant commissioner at the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority who was suspended by Mayor Byron Brown for racist remarks that were taped without his knowledge, will have a chance to make his case for reinstatement in front of a hearing officer Friday (Dec.18) at 9:30 a.m. in Buffalo City Court, Part 30.

The 70-year-old activist insists he is not a racist, and said if he was, "it would have shown up a long time

ago." He plans to challenge the circumstances of the recording made by Paul Christopher during a four-hour car ride to Albany earlier this year.

Mascia has said that politics may have played a role in the tape being made as he was a candidate for the Fillmore District council seat when Christopher his tape, in effect torpedoing his candidacy.

Mascia will be represented by prominent Buffalo civil rights attorney Steven Cohen.



# What America Desperately Needs:

## 1 – Religion Defined and

## 2 – Donald Trump as President



**J. Gary DiLaura**

### The Right Side

(J. Gary DiLaura is a retired FBI Agent who is inclined to exercise - at his sole discretion - his 1st Amendment rights under the US Constitution. Your response is welcome.)

I don't understand why it's so difficult for some people to grasp this concept. We have RULES, REGULATIONS, A CONSTITUTION and, in general, LAWS that we live by and the combination of which establish what we call our RULE OF LAW! If you violate our RULE OF LAW we call you a CRIMINAL and if you are convicted we call you a CONVICT, simple, right?!

If you belong to a group of law breakers we call that a CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION. Good examples would be the Cosa Nostra, the Black Liberation Army, the PLO, the KKK and so forth.

If the KKK claimed that they are a "Religion" that believes in killing black people who

don't do what the KKK believes and... the KKK should be allowed to practice and preach their religious beliefs under our First Amendment to the Constitution. What would (did) we say? If they asked for tax exemption status as a religion, what would our laws say! If they wanted protection under the First Amendment, what would our laws say?

Well, here we have Islam. This is a "group or faith" that believes that there is no separation of Church and State and that a Supreme leader or Dictator, called the Ayatollah rules, not any elected President!

All must follow the Islam book of Rules called the Quran, not the United States Constitution nor the United States Rule of Law! They believe that UNBELIEVERS must be killed, beheaded, stoned to death but not just blacks...all who fail to follow their beliefs AND they are doing that both here and abroad!! So what the hell is the difference? They preach and practice violence that is completely contradicting to and in violation of our laws and the idiots we elected don't have the balls to stop them! DONALD TRUMP DOES, BABY, AND YOU ARE BETTING YOUR ASS ON IT!!

The biggest violator of our Rule of Law would be Saudi Arabia, that's right! That's if we allowed them to practice their beliefs here as they do in Saudi Arabia! They practice strict Sharia law following the Quran! So does Iran as well as 35+/- of the other 57 Muslim Nations! That's a little bigger than the KKK that we stopped, isn't it?

So what do we do to distinguish "radical or traditional" Muslims from the "good" Muslims? We certainly don't want to upset ISIS or Debbie Wasserman Schultz or Valerie Jarrett, by being politically incorrect, so we simply say that;

1.No group, of two or more people, that preaches or practices violence of any type, where that violence is in direct conflict with the Constitution or the laws of the United States or the laws of the States, may be considered a religion,

as set forth in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

2. No such group shall be afforded any of the protections, either criminal or civil, afforded to religions by the Constitution or the laws of the United States or laws of any State, and is by this amendment, defined as a Criminal Organization, and may be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, by law enforcement agencies of the United States and the States in accordance with the laws of the United States and the laws of the States.

3. No investigation of any group, as defined in 1 above, by any sworn and duly appointed law enforcement agency may be thwarted, infringed, or hindered by anyone or any agency or any judicial jurisdiction under the claim of religion, religious group or faith.

Make it a law or the 28th Amendment to the Constitution but MAKE IT LAW. Who could possibly object? It doesn't mention ANY Religion, does it?

Why are so many people afraid of Trump? The man is a Patriot and is a man of his word.

I can tell you that the Criminal Organization lead by Barack Obama and his followers Valerie Jarrett, Lois Lerhner, Hillary Clinton, Eric Holder and many, many more are crapping their pants because Trump is a Patriot and is going to go after ALL of the Treasonous bastards, without a doubt! There is no statute of limitation for Treason and the penalty is DEATH! People like Lerhner and Valerie Jarrett will crumble like poorly baked cookies when they face the FBI without the backing of a President who "has your back". When Obama's CZARS, people who couldn't pass an FBI background investigation, are under intense scrutiny for what they did to the top secret computer info they were given access to by Obama and Jarrett, they will trip over their own feet trying to "make a deal". I only wish I could do some of those interviews! Starting with Jarrett!!!

If you elect Trump I guarantee you that Obama will be stripped of "his glory", be indicted, and die a broken man. He pulled the BIGGEST fraud known to modern man!!! He will get what he deserves for what he did to your Country! His followers will cut deals and hand each other up faster that we can ask them to!

VOTE FOR TRUMP or start wearing bullet proof vests when you go to the show!



**Are great things ever done smoothly? Time, patience, and indomitable will must show...**

**Brave, bold people, these are what we want. What we want is vigor in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel.**

**Swami Vivekananda**

## Enjoy The 'Time of Your Life' at Ricky's Nifty Fifty Pizza Junction 'Come In and Be Yourself', Says Ricky



Hello again everyone. Welcome to another edition of Ricky's Corner. I wanted to start this week's column by writing about what we and our loyal customers feel that makes our pizza unique and great tasting.



Our cheese is a manually sliced mozzarella as opposed to the pre-shredded brands most pizzerias use. The cheese is a part skim and low moisture blend that really brings out the natural flavors of the cheese. Our world famous pizza sauce is fully homemade. We make our sauce slightly on the sweeter side, we believe that having the sauce on the sweeter side makes for a more robust flavor profile. The pepperoni we use is a combination of beef & pork that is both spicy and sweet. Our portions of cheese & pepperoni that we use on our pies & trays are far and away the most generous in the area, no skimping here!!! I truly believe in our product, to the point where I actually have to ration how much I allow myself to eat each

week. Don't take my word for it, call us and have us bring a fresh pie out to your door step and see for yourself. I am positive you'll love it and will be back for more.

This Saturday we are having our first annual Christmas party. We will have many unique Christmas drinks available at our bar, a FREE pizza buffet and we booked the great local band A List to perform on our 50's style stage. Please come on down and join us for



some holiday fun, mouth watering food, great drinks and awesome music. Our number is 283-7700 and we are at 7710 Buffalo Ave. And don't forget to tell 'em, Ricky sent ya :)



**"In the time of your life.... Seek goodness everywhere, and when it is found, bring it out of its hiding place and let it be free and unashamed. William Saroyan"**



NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER DEC 17 – DEC 31, 2015

## McNall Will Be New Chairman Of Niagara Co. Legislature

Wm. Keith McNall will be the first post-Bill Ross chairman of the Niagara County Legislature.

That move—rumored in local media for several days—became reality Tuesday night as members of the Legislature's Majority Caucus—which controls three-quarters of the seats in that body—formally elected the Lockport Republican to succeed the long-tenured Ross.

Nominating McNall was Legislature Vice Chairman Clyde L. Burmaster, R-Ransomville, who will continue in that role.

At the Majority's reorganizational dinner, held at Pane's Restaurant in North Tonawanda, McNall told fellow lawmakers. "The challenges county government faces today are unending, and I will try to lead our Legislature in the proper direction."

McNall entered the Legislature in December 2006. He served for 18 years on the Lockport City School District's Board of Education, with six years as president.

Second-term lawmaker Randy R. Bradt, R-North Tonawanda, was elected majority leader, succeeding Legislator Rick Updegrave, R-Lockport, as the Majority Caucus's floor leader.

Legislators John Syracuse, R-Newfane, and Michael A. Hill, R-Middleport, will serve as deputy majority leaders. County Attorney Claude A. Joerg will continue in that



**W. K. McNall will succeed William Ross as chairman of the Niagara County Legislature**

role, as will Clerk of the Legislature Mary Jo Tamburlin. Public Defender David J. Farrugia will be reappointed to that post, and Gary Billingsley will continue as attorney for the elderly.

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## Is There a Conspiracy to Stop Kristen Grandinetti From Becoming Chairwoman?

**Anna Howard**

Two weeks ago the Reporter went on record with an editorial recommending that two term councilwoman Kristen Grandinetti be elected council chairwoman for 2016. We had no idea our editorial would cause a stir and set people howling at the notion that we'd seriously promote Kristen for the top council seat.

Over the past several years we've clearly demonstrated that we're not the councilwoman's biggest supporter. However, our argument to seat her as chairwoman reasoned that, after serving six years on the council, and with other council members having failed to distinguish themselves as chairman, she deserved a year with the gavel.

And yet the cries of displeasure at the mere thought of "Chairwoman Grandinetti" were surprisingly loud if not clear. It seems that those who are desirous of a second year of Chairman Andrew Touma - the mayor is believed to be among the desirous - are arguing that there's now a "tremendous positive momentum in the city and greater cooperation than ever before between council and mayor." This new era of positive momentum and new cooperation must be maintained by keeping chairman Touma in place.

Or so goes the pro Touma doctrine.

If out of control spending, a mysterious recurring city deficit, frozen water lines, a trash and recycling plan that's garbage, a



**Who will be the next council chairman? Kristen Grandinetti, Andrew Touma or Charles Walker?**

foolish city-wide privatized parking plan, zero governmental transparency, and a 2016 property reassessment plan supported by the current chairman pass for good government, we frankly fail to see it.

As for Charles Walker - a man who has sat in the council chambers for two decades and served as chairman several times - sources tell us he's testing the waters for yet another run for chairman. He might accomplish that task by putting his arm around council newbies Ezra Scott and Ken Tomkins by promising them each the council chairmanship (2017 and 2018) in return for their support in 2016.

Far be it for the Reporter to speculate as to how quid pro quo political horse trading could impact the careers of the newly elected council members. However, we see nothing

but negatives for Scott and Tomkins if they take a bite of Walker's apple in return for future considerations. Such a Walker temptation would literally be the first test of leadership for the two rookies and it might discredit them from day one of their council term should they succumb. Scott has presented himself as new and fresh. Tomkins has presented himself as a straight forward get'er done candidate. To roll with an elected official, like Walker, straight out of the gate - might label them as "typical deal cutting politicians."

What we find comical about the question of, "should we or shouldn't we let Kristen Grandinetti become chairman" is that the council members aren't electing the leader of the free world, they're appointing from among their membership, a person who will guide their meetings and represent the face of the council to the residents. There's nothing more to it.

Nothing more to it, that is, unless the councilmen are conspiring to prevent the councilwoman from becoming chairwoman.

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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.

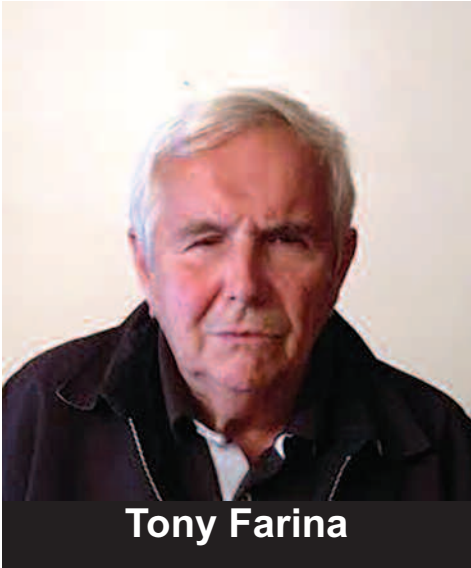
Laborers' Local #91 would like to extend a sincere thank you to the New York State Power Authority (NYPA), the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, New York State Parks, and all Niagara County School Districts for the extensive amount of good paying jobs they provided this past year to all of our locally 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.

**Happy Holidays!**



# New Bid Launched to Track State’s Costs to Defend Canalside Suit



Tony Farina

In an effort to keep track of the mounting legal fees taxpayers are paying to Buffalo’s second biggest law firm to defend a wrongful termination suit filed against the state by the Dipizio Construction Co. in the replica canal project, we have filed another Freedom of Information (FOIL) request with the ultra-secretive Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC), the state agency created to spearhead Buffalo’s waterfront redevelopment.

It was ECHDC led by Sam Hoyt (regional president, Empire State Development) that terminated Dipizio from the \$20 million replica canal project in May of 2013 in a messy breakup that had the firm crying foul, claiming--among other things-- that it was blamed for construction delays in the project that were actually the fault of the state.

If our latest request for information on the legal costs of defending the suit follows the same track as our previous request, it could be several months before the state


comes up with a number.

It took nearly three months back in the fall of 2013 for ECHDC to respond to our FOIL request for an accounting, and when a response finally came in December, it pegged the legal fees to Phillips Lytle at \$349,684.47 and counting. That was two years ago. In the meantime, the suit has continued with Dipizio winning several rounds locally and a trial now scheduled in May in State Supreme Court.

Hoyt, in a recent deposition, appeared to confirm that the state’s legal budget for Phillips Lytle now totals \$1.7 million, and the costs are likely to easily exceed that number with legal motions, the upcoming trial, and possibly a role for the firm in the RICO suit filed by Dipizio. In short, while ice skating at the much-hyped Canalside rink is often hit-and-miss, there’s no uncertainty about the legal tab the state is running up in defending the termination of the company awarded that replica canal project and dismissed under what many see as foggy circumstances.

Dipizio, a company that boasted a strong 37-year record in local development, insisted from the time of termination that delays and increased costs with the project were caused by government bungling and off-the-mark interpretations of the contract.

In contrast to the state’s blank check-book (taxpayer money) to cover the huge legal costs, Dipizio has had to pay its own legal fees and has suffered severe damage to its reputation as a result of the sudden termination. Efforts to reach a settlement on the lawsuit have been unsuccessful and Roseanne Dipizio has vowed to fight on to defend the company her father started 37 years ago.



“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.”

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

Chuck Shephard

But Isn't That Their Skill Set?

In November, lawyer Michael Petersen of Appleton, Wisconsin, was ordered by county judge Philip Kirk (in a sentence for contempt of court) to inform every client he acquires in the following 12 months that Petersen is a “crook,” “cheat,” “thief” and “liar.” Kirk concluded that Peterson had lied about a plea deal with the prosecutor and created phony documents for backup, leading a client to plead guilty to armed robbery when the prosecutor said there was never such a deal. According to the Appleton Post Crescent, Kirk (after dressing down Petersen in colorful language) told him, “I want you to have as much business as a pimp in a nursing home.”

Can't Possibly Be True

Pastor Thom Miller, 60 (of the United Christian Ministries International in Mansfield, Ohio), told an international news crew recently that he had “married” his 19-year-old pregnant girlfriend (Reba Kerfoot), but that some in his congregation disapprove—because Miller is already married (though his incumbent wife, Belinda, 44, apparently does approve). Said Belinda, “Thom is the love of my life and Reba is the blessing of my life, so it all works.” Said Miller, “Sexually I have no preference and look forward

to my time alone with both wives.” (Bonuses: (1) Miller was an enforcer for organized crime in Cleveland until he “found God” in prison. (2) He is annoyed that Ohio recognizes same-sex marriage but not polygamy. (3) The local Mansfield News Journal was apparently scooped on the story but is now catching up.)

Mexican artist Renato Garza Cervera’s work usually involves realistic-looking figures created to startle (e.g., a “piggy bank” as a scowling hog of a man down on all fours), but his recent “gang member” floor rugs seem a career peak. Rejecting bear rugs and lion rugs, Cervera’s “Of Genuine Contemporary Beast” project features exquisitely constructed, life-size, snarling, naked, heavily tattooed men’s bodies (as if skinned) as rugs, representing “modern” beasts—Salvadorean gang members. Actually, Cervera told Vice.com he intended sympathy: “Societies always invent new beasts in order to make others responsible for their problems.”

Las Vegas police continue to investigate Kimberly Knight after a video surfaced on her fetish pornography website purporting to be of a medical doctor performing a breast-enlargement procedure and then immediately having sex with the patient. KTNV-TV has questioned Knight on the authenticity of the claims, and she seemed to back off slightly, describing the surgeon as a “medical student,” then characterizing the

whole thing as a “mistake.” As of early December, Knight had not been charged with a crime.

The Finer Points of the Law

Justice! In September, federal judge Cathy Seibel ordered the town of Liberty, New York (100 miles from New York City), to stand trial for failure to teach police and prosecutors proper free-speech law—thus giving plaintiff William Barboza revenge for his arrest for writing a “crude” message on the speeding ticket he paid three years ago. Seibel ruled that Barboza’s phrase (urging intercourse upon the manure-like town) posed no “imminent” threat and, besides, was obviously just a complaint about government services. Seibel also raised the possibility that money damages will come from the prosecutor’s own pocket.

Dr. Bilgin Ciftci was fired in October from Turkey’s Public Health Institution and later charged with violating one of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s favorite laws—against “insulting” the president (which carries a maximum four-year prison term)—because Ciftci had joined a Turkish Facebook thread that was denouncing Erdogan with facial images comparing him to the Lord of the Rings character Gollum. The judge, admitting his unfamiliarity, appointed a five-person group of experts to advise him whether the Erdogan-Gollum comparison was “insulting.” (The Lord of the Rings film

director Peter Jackson immediately protested that the images depict not Gollum but his benign alter ego Smeagol, making the comparison obviously uninsulting.)

The Job of the Researcher

Scientists from Australia’s University of Queensland have developed “swimsuits” to act as diapers for six giant loggerhead turtles as they study their diets by examining their feces. “To our great surprise,” said one researcher, they “worked perfectly.” The suits were easy to put on, comfortable for the sea turtles to wear (according to the researchers, not the turtles), looked great (ditto), and we were “able to collect the entire fecal sample,” he bragged to a London Daily Telegraph reporter in Sydney.

After all, leeches are interesting and thus someone has to study them, and Mark Siddall, curator of invertebrates at the American Museum of Natural History, is that person. These leeches are easily found, but only in the rear ends of hippopotamuses, he noted, and told Wired.com in August that if a creature can exploit a niche others cannot, it has a monopoly on food. “The only part on the hippo that’s vascularized enough to get a good blood meal (is) the rectal region.” (Making life worse for these leeches, they lack the strong jaws of other leeches and must instead use a nose-like organ that, writes Wired, it “snakes” into the vascular tissue.)

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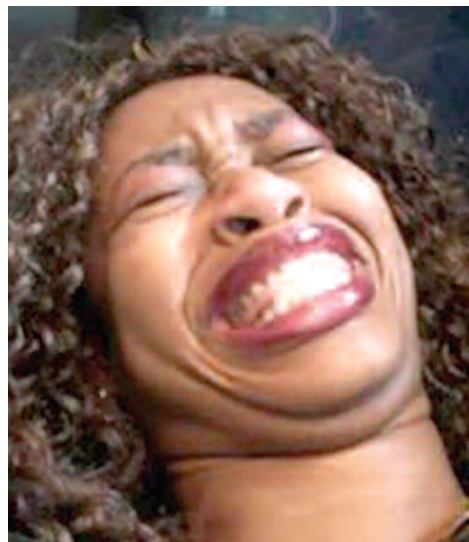
# CITY HALL JOKES...



Hot on the heels of the surprise announcement that a methadone clinic will be setting up shop in the former school district offices on 6th Street, the Reporter is chasing a hot rumor that Dyster's city hall is going to locate an ISIS owned Burger King on Rainbow Boulevard.



The 2016 city budget - that was approved in secrecy on November 17 - has been dubbed "the stealth budget." That's because just like the stealth bomber people don't realize it's there until things start exploding and everything goes up in smoke.



While Santa Claus disappeared two weeks ago during the Dyster-Owens Holly Trolley there's no truth to the rumor that he disappeared inside the Trott Building methadone clinic.



However, it's true that Santa was seen waiting for a bus on the corner of Main and Cleveland with Totes McGoat earlier that day.



Paul Dyster, Totes McGoat and Santa Claus walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and yells, "No creeps allowed! Totes and Santa, you can stay."



There's lots of talk as to whether the city hall men's club will finally allow Kristen Grandinetti to become council chairperson. Councilmen Walker and Touma said they have no problem with a female taking the chairman's seat. They said, "Our only request is that the person holding the position possess an X and Y chromosome."



Will this guy ever admit to knowing anything about anything? Mayor Dyster didn't know about the loss of 200 jobs at DuPont/Chemours. He hadn't a clue about the planned methadone clinic. He didn't know about the plans for the Y becoming a homeless shelter until the sale of the building was finalized. And the true cause of the frozen water lines on 72nd Street was a mystery to him until a secret engineering report that he was privy to from day one eventually became public. Is he that out of touch or is he that devious? We report you decide, but you're stuck with him for four more years.

## Half-Court Basketball League Starting at Lockport YMCA

Lockport, NY. Registration is currently open for the YMCA's new 3 on 3 – ½ Court

Men's Basketball League that starts on January 28th, 2016. The Men's League will run for seven weeks and end with finals starting in early March. Each team will play at least 14 games (Thursday & Friday nights) and potentially more with finals.

Adults age 17+ are encouraged to either sign up with a team of 3 (a 4th alternate is allowed) or register by themselves as a few teams will be created at the Lockport YMCA. Registration per team is \$30; Lockport YMCA Members \$50 per person; Program Members (Non-Members of the Y) are \$100 per person. Each team is responsible for jerseys or wearing like colors for games. YMCA Staff referees will enforce rules, regulations, and participant code of conduct for players.

For additional information on to register, contact the Youth Sports & Teen Leadership Director, Luke Kantor, at the Lockport Family YMCA at 716-434-8887. or online at [www.LockportYMCA.com](http://www.LockportYMCA.com)

## Thunder of Niagara Air Show wins coveted Dick Schram Memorial Community Relations Award for 2015

The Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base, home of the Air Force Reserve 914th Airlift Wing and New York Air National Guard's 107th Airlift Wing, was presented the Dick Schram Memorial Community Relations Award at the Chairman's Banquet during the 2015 International Council of Air Shows on Dec. 08, 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

"For the Thunder of Niagara Airshow to win this award at the 2015 ICAS Chairman's Dinner was an incredible honor, not only because it was a win for our entire base, but a win for the entire Western New York Community," said Maj. Benjamin Canetti, Air Show Director, 914th Operations Support Squadron.

"Our base was submitted for this award in competition with every military airshow in the 2015 season throughout the U.S. and Canada. It is the first time this award has

been brought home by a Wing in Air Force Reserve Command."

The Dick Schram Memorial Community Relations Award is presented each year to the military base which, in planning and implementing its air show, not only exhibits traditional community relations as it considers the needs of its civilian neighbors, but sets new standards of excellence in this area by including its community in the planning, execution and rewards of the event.

"The 2015 Thunder of Niagara Air Show was designed to increase public awareness of our military, highlight the bravery of men and women in uniform and show the base's appreciation to the people of Western New York for their many years of tremendous support," Staff Sgt. Matthew Burke tells the Reporter.

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# Your Weekly Horoscope

By Jean Topascani



## Aries: (March 21 - April 19):

People can't miss you if you won't go away. Whatever it is that's eating you, it must be suffering horribly. The overwhelming power of the sex drive is demonstrated by the fact that someone was willing to father you. This week you will have cause to remember that there is no vaccine against stupidity.



## Taurus: (April 20 - May 20):

People like to help you out; once they know which way you came in. Next time you get the urge to think...don't. Moonlight becomes you – total darkness even more! People say that you are the perfect idiot. You are not perfect but you are doing all right.



## Gemini: (May 21 - June 20):

You are free of all prejudice. You hate everyone equally. People can't say that you have absolutely nothing! After all, you have inferiority! People like you make the Internet all but impossible to trust. Someone took a photo of you once but it didn't turn out. You could be seen too clearly.



## Cancer: (June 21 - July 22):

If idiots could fly, you would be an airport. Having control over yourself is nearly as good as having control over others. People never forget the first time they met you – although somehow they keep trying. You have no idea how acutely depressing it is for other people to realize they're from the same species as you.



## Leo: (July 23 - August 22):

People don't know what your problem is, but they believe it must be hard to pronounce. Don't hate yourself in the morning. Sleep till noon. Sat. PM Date asks you to slip into something more comfortable...like a coma. Every other day: All things being equal, you lose.



## Virgo: (August 23 - September 22):

If brains were dynamite, you wouldn't have enough to blow your nose. You're feeling good, don't worry. You'll get over it. You don't know the meaning of the word fear, but then again you don't know the meaning of most words. It is not enough for you to succeed. Others must

fail in the process.



## Libra: (September 23 - October 22):

It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others. Nothing is quite so annoying to you as to have someone go right on talking when you're interrupting. Don't feel sorry for yourself because you are so homely feel sorry for other people because they have to look at you.



## Scorpio: (October 23 - November 21):

Today is not your day. Tomorrow isn't looking good either. You love nature, despite what it did to you.

You become connected to the Police Department — by a pair of handcuffs.

You're not as stupid as you look. Nobody could be! It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere.



## Sagittarius: (November 22 - December 21):

Close counts. When you ask your boss if you are an asset. He tells you, you are only off by two letters. Opposites attract. You are attracted to

someone who is good-looking, intelligent, and cultured.

Someone has to be listening to you for it to be an actual conversation.



## Capricorn: (December 22 - January 19):

People wonder what life would have been like if you had had enough oxygen at birth. Slow down. There are enough people to hate in the world already without your working so hard to give us another.

This week a surprising number of people will ask you, Do they ever shut up on your planet?



## Aquarius: (January 20 - February 18):

What you lack in intelligence, you more than makes up for in stupidity. Cream rises to the top. So does the scum. You are so dishonest that people can't even be sure that what you tell them are lies! Smile... Tomorrow will be worse.



## Pisces: (February 19 - March 20):

Your inferiority complex is fully justified. People will follow you anywhere, but only out of morbid curiosity.

You should have been born in the Dark Ages; you look terrible in the light. You used to be arrogant and obnoxious. Now you are just the opposite. You are obnoxious and arrogant. You were born because your mother didn't believe in abortion; now she believes in infanticide.

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## Black ECC Executive Files Discrimination Complaint Against School

### Tony Farina

With the first state audit of Erie Community College in 20 years due to be released shortly at a time when the institution is facing serious financial challenges, new legal concerns are emerging for President Jack Quinn and his administration in the form of a discrimination complaint filed with the state by the black former associate vice president for legal affairs, Marsha Jackson, who says she was discriminated against “on the basis of my race and color” and denied the opportunity to apply for a higher position.

Jackson, who has a Ph. D. from SUNY Buffalo in higher education administration retired from ECC in October where she was earning \$98,000 a year with over 32 years in the higher education administration field. She was first hired at ECC in December of 2000.

In her complaint filed with the State Division for Human Rights, Jackson said she was denied the opportunity to obtain the position of executive vice president of student affairs which was later filled by a lesser qualified person by appointment of Quinn, an appointment that was approved by the Board of Directors.

Jackson states in her complaint that “I and other African-Americans have complained about Mr. Quinn’s discriminatory hiring practices to the Board of Trustees, which is also aware of Mr. Quinn dispensing with customary search committees when hiring high-level Caucasians and is also aware of the contents of the ECC August, 2011 Diversity Plan, which it adopted on Aug. 31, 2011. I therefore allege that ECC, through its Board of Trustees, has condoned, approved and ratified the discriminatory practices alleged herein.”

Steve Boyd, the chairman of the board, declined to comment on the complaint filed by Jackson.

That’s not the only legal problem facing the college. Last March, we reported that Eileen Flaherty, the former human resources commissioner at ECC, filed a federal human rights lawsuit that singles out Kristin Klein Wheaton--the executive vice president for legal affairs and Quinn’s top aide-- for age discrimination and retaliation before she was terminated by the administration without warning while on medical leave.

We have also learned this week that Wheaton and 20 or so other senior executive staff members were being considered for 2 percent raises by the board after the settlement of two major union contracts over the last several weeks although Boyd said the board has not moved forward with raises for the senior staff at this time.

In the face of surging health care costs and the growing fiscal crisis at ECC, buyouts have been offered to the senior staff, administrators union, and the Faculty Federation, offers which ended on Wednesday (Dec. 16).

Boyd said by text that 37 members of the Faculty Federation accepted the buyout offer. The cost to ECC was \$1,349,128 vs. a total yearly salary cost of \$2,727,498. Twelve members of the administrators union took buyouts, totaling \$442,388 vs. the one-year salary total of \$1,045,546. The school had budgeted \$200,000 for senior staff buyouts, but only one member took it, at a cost of \$40,000 vs. a yearly salary of \$107,000.


Erie County has only slightly increased its annual subsidy to ECC, leaving its contribution far below the 26.7 percent called for in the funding formula under state law for community colleges. The school, under Quinn, has depleted the reserve fund and hiked tuition to keep the institution above water, but without a significant increase in county and state assistance, future tuition hikes and other emergency measures seem certain. The findings of a recent state audit are expected to be released sometime next month.



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