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NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

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JUN 30 - JUL 08, 2015

VOL. 16, NO. 25

FREE

New York missed out on night tours and \$100 million with Maid of the Mist



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Hornblower Operation a Pleasant Sight For One Veteran Newspaperman Here

Mike Hudson

It was a sight to behold.

A beautiful, balmy Saturday night at Niagara Falls State Park, the falls themselves illuminated majestically and the fireworks display exploding overhead. And down in the basin, two gaily lit cruise boats, carrying 700 tourists apiece, made their way to and from their Canadian docks at the base of Clinton Hill for the best view of the awesome spectacle.

The brand new catamarans are owned and operated by Hornblower Cruises and operate from docks formerly used by Jimmy Glynn's Maid of the Mist boats.

Now confined to some hastily constructed makeshift docks on the American side of the Niagara River, the Maid of the Mist boats don't sail at night, offer no seating or lavatories and don't have a licensed bar, food service or other amenities.

Glynn lost his contract to operate on the Canadian side following a government inquiry into his company's relationship with members of the Niagara Parks Commission, who were ultimately removed from the commission or forced to resign. The contract to operate the tour boat service in the park was let on a competitive bidding process that saw Hornblower blow the Maid of the Mist out of the water.

The inquiry stemmed from a series of investigative articles written by the Niagara Falls Reporter Publisher Frank Parlato and published on these pages.

Things were different on the American side, where Glynn's political campaign contributions and association with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership allow him to wield considerable clout. Politicians from Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and U.S. Senator Charles Schumer threw their full support behind him.

There were no official calls for an investigation, and no open, competitive bidding process.

New York State awarded Glynn the contract despite the fact that Hornblower representatives had publicly said they would offer \$100 million more.



Hornblower did everything they promised, plus paid \$300M more!

The nightly Falls Illumination Cruise is a truly extraordinary, once-in-a-lifetime experience, and the ultimate in Niagara nighttime entertainment. Set to starry skies this 40-minute cruise provides stunning panoramic views of the dazzling city lights and famous colored illumination of the falls.

By contrast, the Maid of the Mist's daytime only tours last but 20 minutes, and sightseers are packed like standing room only sardines onto the decks of the smallish boats.

This past Saturday evening, Parlato took a visiting friend to the park for the fireworks display.

He hadn't gone to see the boats, but the sight of 1,400 tourists enjoying themselves conjured the memory of the long battle to improve the quality of tour boats in the basin.

"Sometimes in the newspaper business, you wonder whether or not what you're doing has an impact," Parlato said. "I hadn't even thought about it in quite awhile, but seeing those two beautiful catamarans brought the whole thing rushing back."

The Reporter got involved with the situation after whistleblower Bob Gale, who had been removed from the Niagara Parks Commission, came forth with allegations about improprieties in the relationship between the agency and Glynn. Over the course of more than 70 stories, Parlato made the case that other

tour operators could provide superior service at reduced cost were it not for the fact that Glynn's undue influence prevented open and competitive bidding.

On this side of the river, political leaders had long argued that, since Glynn had the contract on the Canadian side, it only made sense that he would have the American side as well. There simply wasn't room in the basin for two different companies, and the American side lacked dry dock facilities for the storage of the boats in winter months.

After Glynn lost the Canadian franchise, politicians tripped over each other in their effort to construct a new paradigm and new dry docks on the American side, trampling the usual environmental impact studies that normally accompany major construction projects on state park land.

And suddenly, the decades old argument that only one tour boat company could operate in the basin disappeared as though it had never existed.

Hornblower sued the state in an attempt to open the bidding process up in New York, but their case and a subsequent appeal was rejected by judges who essentially said that the state Parks Commission knew what was best.

In Canada, after the contract to run the tour boat concession beneath the falls was thrown open to public bidding, Hornblower Ni-

agara, offered to pay the Ontario government \$500 million over 30 years, some \$300 million more than Glynn proposed in the Maid of the Mist's original deal.

In New York, Hornblower offered to pay \$100 million more than what Glynn had offered.

"Oddly, we're a New York newspaper that, in this case, seemed to have far more influence in Ontario than we did in New York," Parlato said. "We helped open up the basin to competition, which is always a good thing, but the better tour being offered only on the Canadian side just gives tourists another reason to avoid Niagara Falls, New York."

On this side of the river, people still wait in long lines under a blazing sun for a chance to ride on the Maid of the Mist.

Another Hornblower innovation, computerized timed-ticketing, has eliminated much of the discomfort on the Canadian side.

"Stay on the Canadian side," is a trope dating back as far as the 1970s, uttered by experienced travelers to Niagara Falls neophytes asking advice. The actions of the local and state governments to protect and preserve Jimmy Glynn's cash cow here serve merely to reinforce the accepted wisdom.

Following the Canadian decision to terminate the Maid of the Mist contract and open the process up, Parlato wrote an editorial summing up the situation, and the Reporter's role in it.

"The fault of the Maid of the Mist scandal doesn't lie with (Glynn)," Parlato wrote. "He is, after all, a businessman doing what he can to serve his own interests. Who can blame him for taking sweetheart deals, or even facilitating them?"

"The fault lies with us, our failure to demand transparency, our passivity over the fact that government makes secret deals with private businessmen for leases on public land. No businessman could have gotten a no-bid sweetheart deal at the public's expense without secrecy. The public has the right to know every nuance of every deal involving public land."

His words now ring true on the Canadian side of the mighty Niagara River. On the American side, not so much.

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER

"The Truth is Always Fair"

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Parking Plan Will Not be Approved Until After Election Council Majority Say; Meanwhile Dyster plans second RFP with more meters in city

Frank Parlato

A surprise is in store for those who want to rush the Niagara Falls parking plan through.

Three councilmen – constituting a majority – Chairman Andrew Touma, and councilmembers Glenn Choolokian and Robert Anderson- have told the Niagara Falls Reporter that they are not going to approve any parking plan until after the election.

“The trash plan, it’s done,” said Touma. “it was improperly rushed by the Dyster administration. But nobody’s going to hold my feet to the fire again. There are too many unanswered questions about the parking plan and anybody who studies it seriously can see that.”

Among the concerns are that the city’s parking consultant, Desman Associates, admits the parking plan is three years away from seeing a profit.

That’s assuming Dyster won’t screw it up.

Secondly no one has seen the private- public partnership contract.

That’s because there is no contract.

Still since the plan won’t turn a profit for at least three years and yet there is this rush to get the plan passed- that alone should make people wonder.

The argument is that the city needs to earn money that was falsely put into the 2015 revenue line for a program that won’t turn a profit for years to come.

Back in May four of five city councilmen questioned the plan set forth by Dyster, including how much revenue a private parking meter operator would take and what role a proposed parking manager might play should the position be added to the city’s payroll.

Only Kristen Grandinetti voted in favor of the Dyster parking plan that she admitted she did not understand.

She said she found the proposal “very confusing” but voted for it anyway.

Last week Dyster called upon the city’s parking consultant, Desman Associates, to provide the council with more information.

Gregory Shumate, an associate with Desman, told the council that a private firm handling meter collection and enforcement would get a share of the money.

The plan – which is not in writing and not defined - calls for the city to hire a parking manager to oversee the private operator and the formation of a parking committee consisting of city officials who might get stipends for their added work.

Desman believes the city should add a parking manager position to its payroll.

That will cost between \$70,000- 100,000 a year counting health insurance and pension benefits – eating up most of the profits.

Desman has estimated annual expense for the program at about \$100,000, conservatively suggesting that once fully installed the meters could return a little more than \$176,000 in revenue for a full year, not including funds collected through

parking violations.

The only thing known so far – and the one thing Dyster wants the council to vote on – which they say they won’t - is that the phase one parking meter installation which is \$258,950 by Ber National Automaton of Rochester.

That figure does not include the meters – but only the installation.

Touma joined Choolokian and Anderson in questioning the administration’s plan to have the meters installed before having a plan for how the meters will be handled by a private operator and how enforcement will be handled.

“That means the tourist season will be missed any way you look at it,” Choolokian said. “Hence there is no rush.”

Touma agreed pointing out that the meters are only good for about seven years.

“Why put them in now? The revenue is in the summer. So if we put them in now we put them through a winter and get instead of seven years of revenue, only six years,” Touma said. “The consultant said it only takes a few weeks to install. We can decide in the spring and still get them in on time.”

Shumate says it will take at least 60 and perhaps up to 90 days from the approval of an agreement before the 40 meters – which each will handle between 4 and 12 spaces each could be in place and operational downtown.

Desman is encouraging the city to install pay-by-license plate machines that would allow users to pay by either cash or credit cards.

Dyster said that the city has been informed by representatives from Ber-National Automation, Inc. that the company is prepared to hold its \$258,950 bid price for only another 45 days.

Touma said, “I’m not worried about the price going up. I’m not going to rush on account of that. Let’s face it, the price is not going to go up in the winter when the demand is less.”

Today nobody has the answers.

Where are the ultimate boundaries of the parking plan?

Should there be public hearings?

Will the new parking employee need a city vehicle to monitor the private parking company?

What is the split between the company and the city?

How long will the deal be?

It can’t be called a deficit plugging measure since the parking plan won’t turn a profit for three years.

So what’s the rush to cobble together a parking plan that in three years will have an \$80,000 profit to put toward the \$7.6 million deficit?

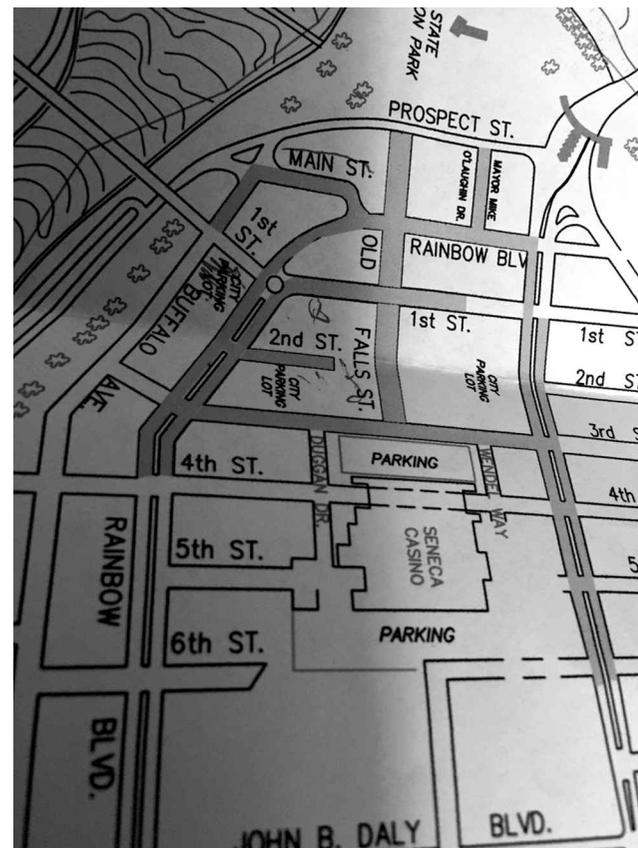
Tom Darro was on his WJL radio show promoting Dyster’s parking plan.

Darro said it will only cost \$1 to park.

Shumate said that the meters will probably be calibrated to charge \$1.50 per hour for parking.

Darro said he can’t understand why they only want to have 40 parking spaces.

It’s going to be over 400 spaces. Each of some 40 meters will accommodate 4 – 12 parking spaces.



(Above) The first phase of the parking plan will see meters on these downtown streets. The Dyster administration through the Niagara Falls City Clerk will be sending out a new RFP for phase two which will call for more city streets to have meters. To date the Dyster administration is not saying where those streets will be. Whether it will be Pine Ave. or merely surface parking lots is unknown at this time.

Darro's remarks on air prompted an immediate call from a man who said the city should be charging to launch boats at Griffon Park.

The caller also said "parking meters are everywhere and we should have them here too."

Darro said "so that's another revenue stream for us!"

A revenue stream that wouldn't be enough to cover minimum wage pay for an attendant at the launch site.

Councilman Anderson, who opposes the rush to implement a half-hatched plan, said, “There is no demand in the winter for downtown parking. It could be a deterrent to business in winter. Think about it. Suppose you are thinking about meeting a friend at Starbucks in January. You can go downtown and pay \$3 each to park for two hours or you can go to Strabucks in LaSalle and park for free. So which are you going to choose?”

“You have to remember that the demand for parking is only for 60-90 days in the summer. Aside from Memorial (continued from page 3)

(Continued on page 4)

'Just Walking in the Rain,' Choolokian Gets Signatures, Makes New Friends Everywhere

Councilman Glenn Choolokian is running in the Democratic Primary for mayor and he is known for his love of walking door to door.

Four years ago when he ran for council, he went to more than 5,000 doors.

That may be because he knows it is an effective method of campaigning.

It may also be because he feels an affinity with the people he connects with as if they are his own people.

In any event, he walks even when it rains.

Last Saturday Choolokian was out getting wet and getting signatures in the rain in LaSalle.

“The people of this city are my neigh-



bors – I enjoy seeing old friends and meeting new friends, that’s why I like going to door to door,” Choolokian said.

Choolokian said he expects to visit about 15,000 doors this season.

Won't You be My Mayor
Mayoral Candidate Glenn Choolokian greets Alice Stopa, who signs his nominating petition for Mayor.
Her French bulldog Camille wishes she could vote too.

He said he already has about 900 signatures he got personally at hundreds of doors.

"I will be waking all the way until September," he said. "I walk every day. I meet people and hear their problems. You hear a lot of things when you walk. You get common sense perspectives. You hear good

things and bad things too.

“Personally I like to go to every neighborhood. It's nice to hear everybody's neighborhood voices.

“There are still so many good people left in this city. If only we put them first and not outside consultants and out of town developers.

"Our people - the ones I meet - from day to day - at their beautiful homes. And remember the beauty of a home is the people who live in it and the friends who visit it. "In this respect Niagara Falls has the most beautiful homes anywhere.

“Let us not forget this ever again and forget to put our people first.”

Will Pine Ave. Have Meters?

(Continued from page 3)

Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day, downtown parking is rarely a problem. Private parking lot operators earn the bulk of their annual revenues on a dozen or so weekends each year. This has to be considered before we rush into a plan," Anderson said.

One of the big things being pushed by Desman and Dyster is the possible privatization of all or part of the parking in Niagara Falls.

Chicago sold control of the city streets to a consortium of investors.

The issue goes back to the 2008 meter privatization agreement rubber-stamped by the Chicago City Council at the urging of former mayor Richard M. Daley.

It turned over 36,000 parking meters for 75 years to Chicago Parking Meters LLC, a group of investors led by Morgan Stanley, an investment bank; Allianz, a German financial firm; and the government of Abu Dhabi.

In exchange, Chicago Parking Meters

LLC paid the city \$1.2 billion, which Mayor Daley said he would tuck away, using the interest to replace the \$20 million the city collected annually from the meters. Instead, the city ran through nearly \$1 billion of the payout within two years of adopting the deal.

Chicago Parking Meters LLC doubled the meter rates, then doubled them again, to \$2 an hour in most parts of the city, and as much as \$6.50 an hour downtown.

In 2008 the city collected \$23.8 million from the meters.

Four years later Chicago Parking Meters LLC collected \$139.5 million, according to audited reports filed with the city.

Not only are drivers paying more to park, they're forking it over to Chicago Parking Meters LLC instead of providing the money for basic city services—like filling potholes.

Chicago made that kind of deal.

Desman Associates, the parking consulting firm for Mayor Dyster, was part of the Morgan Stanley team that landed the Chicago

leases.

One of the bidders on the Niagara Falls parking meter installation, Karen Cardillo, who represents Hectronits, and who did the meters for Niagara Falls Ontario, Austin Texas, Waterbury Connecticut and other cities and said she plans to bid again if and when the city puts the parking meters out to bid after the mayoral election, said the present Dyster plan is wrong.

"I think the city put the cart before the horse," Cardillo said. "If you are going to put meters out there, if you don't enforce it, you're not going to make money. Enforcing is the most important thing. The second thing is what is the city going to do with these funds once they have it? That depends on the business community, and what the voters want. Those questions have to be answered first before you rush to put in meters.

"If you put in the meters before you decide how to enforce, the enforcement com-

pany may not be compatible with the software used for the meters. First you have to decide enforcement then you install the meters. The meters are the easy part of this whole equation.

"When I asked the Dyster administration how they were going to enforce they said they didn't know."

Cardillo also said she was recently alerted by one of her industry websites such as Bidnet.com that the city was putting out a second bid for more city meters at more locations other than those covered in the downtown bid she won but was disqualified.

"I was surprised to see the second notification. It doesn't make sense," she said.

Cardillo did not know where phase two of Dyster's parking meters will be located or whether Pine Ave. was included in the second phase.

She said the bid has not been released yet, but it will become public soon, according to her industry website service.

Sheriff's Work Release Program Stands in Sharp Contrast to Flawed Welfare Work Program

This newspaper's probing of questions surrounding the management of a state-mandated program where welfare recipients were required to perform physical labor at county sites prompted interesting comparisons to a similar, but seemingly better-managed program operated under the auspices of the Niagara County Sheriff's Office.

That program—technically the Alternatives to Incarceration Program, but known colloquially as the Sheriff's Work Release Program—has produced millions of dollars in savings, yet has been free of safety incidents and public safety concerns for the past two decades.

This, despite running three crews five days a week.

Joe Jastrzemski, the coordinator of the Alternatives to Incarceration program, told us a bit about what has been his charge for the past 19 years Monday, explaining that the goals of the program are twofold: to give those who have broken the law an opportunity to make their misdeeds right with the community, and to help save local governments and nonprofit agencies the costs associated with hiring laborers for many menial tasks.

"These are non-violent offenders who, in many cases it makes no sense to put behind bars at expense to the taxpayers," Jastrzemski told us. "Just last year, participants in this program saved the taxpayers of Niagara County a little over \$1.6 million that we would have spent housing and feeding them in our county jail. Instead of costing the taxpayers for their care, they produced 13,949 hours of free labor for local governments and non-profits."

The program also utilizes low-risk county jail inmates, offering them a few hours of supervised work in the fresh air in exchange for their labor. The inmates provided an additional 8,960 hours of free labor.

Jastrzemski says that, assuming a \$10 per hour average wage, the inmates and Alternatives to Incarceration labor saved city and town governments and various nonprofit agencies \$226,000 in outlays.

Jastrzemski said both the savings from not housing Alternatives to Incarceration defendants and the overall amount of labor performed in the community was relatively consistent, year to year.

"Many of these people made a mistake or a bad choice, but have skills and want to make their actions right," Jastrzemski said. "We had skilled painters repainting the inside of a local building, for instance. We try to align skills where it's possible with the tasks at hand."

Jastrzemski—who in his spare time is Wilson's Republican supervisor and that party's candidate to replace outgoing Niagara County Clerk Wayne F. Jagow—showed us a folder containing at least 100 letters from nonprofits and local governments in every corner of the county thanking him and Sheriff James R. Voutour for the assistance provided by the sentenced offenders. A quick review of its contents found letters from dozens of volunteer fire companies thanking Jastrzemski and Voutour for providing labor for everything from repainting fire halls to setting up fire company field days, as well as from town supervisors and then-Mayor Robert G. Ort of North Tonawanda, all praising the program for lowering costs.

One letter, in particular, caught our eye. Written on the letterhead of Niagara Catholic High School, the letter noted that "the contribution of workers enabled us to redirect funds to other educational endeavors."

Similar was a letter from the Lockport Police Department that praised the convict labor for having detailed the city's fleet of squad cars: "Our fleet looks great inside and out when they are done," wrote the then-head of the LPD's Traffic and Support Services Division, Amy Wiltse.

Even public libraries got in on the act, using inmate labor to help organize their Friends of the Library books sales.

"In many cases, these are people who know they made a bad choice, and want the opportunity to put it right. We give them that chance," Jastrzemski said.

The attached photo shows North Tonawanda Legislator Rich Andres giving guidance to a Sheriff's Department work crew supervisor last summer as the Sheriff's Work Release Program helped clean the Lumber City's farmers market site.



Joe Jastrzemski

He noted that, in 19 years coordinating the program, there had never been an incident where an inmate or an Alternatives to Incarceration defendant had ever acted out.

"There is absolutely no benefit to be had in abusing this privilege," Jastrzemski said. "We are giving non-violent inmates an opportunity to get some fresh air, and other convicted individuals—again, non-violent—a way to avoid seeing the inside of our jail. It's a pretty good bargain."

Jastrzemski also noted that demand for inmate labor was being driven partly by societal trends, with many community and civic groups unable to muster adequate volunteer labor for community goals. His program tends to fill that gap nicely.

We raised the issue of worker safety with Jastrzemski, noting that many suggestions pointed to a callous attitude toward the welfare work details that had entered the Shaw Building and likely come in contact with asbestos insulation.

"Safety is always a top concern," Jastrzemski explained. "I have three supervisors under me, and they are all trained on work-site safety. And, we also try to utilize the

skills of inmates where possible, so that they have some basic familiarity with the task at hand. In 19 years, there have been zero safety incidents. That's something we're proud of, but it's something my team always works at."

Jastrzemski declined to speculate about what went wrong with the county's welfare work program, but offered this insight: "I have three supervisors who work for me who understand that, while they are on a job site, those inmates, those convicted defendants, no matter what they might have done, are their charge. I expect that, at the end of the day, while they should be tired out, they should come away having had a rewarding, fair work experience and an opportunity to pay their debt to their community."

The Reporter can't help but wonder if, had that attitude been in place among managers of the county's welfare work program, the entire asbestos matter might have been avoided.

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Librarian Petrazzoulo Joins Flight Away From Declining City, Region

Mike Hudson

OK. So there's the crushing poverty, lack of business opportunities, obscene taxes, brutal weather, high crime and crooked politicians. But a lot of places have those things and they thrive, don't they? What is it about Niagara Falls, specifically, that makes it virtually unlivable?

Certainly not the sausage at the Como, which may be the best in the world, or the pies at Pizza Oven, which are, without a doubt. It's not the mighty Niagara River, the spectacular Cataracts themselves or the close proximity to some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

Since the early 2000s Niagara Falls has been blessed with two top notch professionals to run the library system here. While Mayor Paul Dyster has said that he wanted to conduct nationwide searches for department heads that would produce only the "best and the brightest" candidates to help him run the city, the results have more often than not looked as though they were picked from the rubbish bin.

Who can forget Ali Marzban, the unlicensed "city engineer" who signed off on the disastrous Lewiston Road project or Roger Melchior the unemployed "fire chief" with serious medical problems, an attitude toward race that would have more properly fit in the 19th century and a largely invented resume?

But our two librarians, the veteran Betty Babanoury and the younger Michelle Petrazzoulo carried no such baggage. Both were young, possessed of advanced degrees and, as the city's librarian, each made a high five-figure salary that definitely put them into the monied class. Babanoury owned a two-bedroom condo at the Parkway and Petrazzoulo has a place by the river in Lewiston.

Babanoury resigned five years ago after Dyster, very publicly, called her a liar. Petrazzoulo replaced her, and has since struggled with the same nickel and dime

But the rampant anti-intellectualism, the petty, money based political system and the hopelessness that often leads community leaders to tear each other apart over the most inconsequential trivia imaginable takes its toll, leading Babanoury, Petrazzoulo and who knows how many other rational, thinking human beings to flee the Niagara Frontier as though the place were the center of a smallpox epidemic.

Five years ago, Michelle Petrazzoulo returned to Niagara Falls with high hopes.

Slight and attractive, the single mom's homecoming was front page news. She'd been selected to head up the Niagara Falls Public Library system.

She'd spent 14 years in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library System in North Carolina before agreeing to take the position following the departure of the popular Betty Babanoury, who said that Mayor Paul Dyster cared less about providing library services to the people of Niagara Falls than any of his predecessors she'd worked under, including Vince Anello, Irene Elia, Jim Galie and Jake Palillo. Her departure was sudden and acrimonious. Big news.

As an incoming department head, Pe-



Michelle Petrazzoulo says goodbye to Niagara Falls.

trazzoulo's tenure was controversial from the start.

She'd left Niagara Falls to pursue an education that would allow her to work with the one thing that had been a constant in her life since she was a little girl: Books. Petrazzoulo received her master's degree in library and information studies from Greensboro College after obtaining an undergrad degree in psychology from SUNY Albany.

"I grew up on 72nd Street, and I would ride my bike to the LaSalle Library," she said. "I'd sit at the round table by the window and read my books and get lost here for hours on end."

It was while studying psychology in Albany that she made the decision to become a librarian.

"When I was in college, I did a work-study in the library," she said. "It didn't occur to me that this would be a career. While I always loved books, it was sort of like destiny was standing right in front of me, and I didn't see it at first."

Petrazzoulo made up her mind to leave Niagara Falls months ago.

"When I was younger, I swore I would never come back to Niagara Falls, but I had a good opportunity and I took it" she said. "I had a lot of plans to change things here. I feel that I was able to do so in many ways but looking toward the future, I just don't see myself retiring here."

The navel gazing parochialism inherent in a municipality that proudly claims petty local politics as its most popular spectator sport made working and living here difficult, Petrazzoulo said.

"Niagara Falls is so self contained and insular," she said. "They don't value the library in this community. And then I feel that the Library Board is too political."

Petrazzoulo, exactly the sort of hip, young urban professional Dyster says he wants to attract to the city he governs, is so anxious to get the hell away from her hometown that she's accepted a pay cut to do so, she said.

"I know, many people here think I am crazy for giving up such a salary. I am taking a big pay cut but, to me, life isn't so much about money. It's about happiness," she told the Reporter.

She will be moving to Eaton, a small town in northern Colorado, and a place where the scenic splendor, booming economy and demographically young population combine to make much of what transpires at the local city hall seem a little less important than it does in a declining cultural backwater like Niagara Falls.

"My plan is to be out in the boonies, taking photographs, hiking the occasional trip to the coffee shop or microbrewery, planting a garden and perhaps raising a few chickens," she said.

"There's just so much more positivity in Colorado. I definitely am looking forward to the change," she said. "A new adventure!"

And the public libraries, those vestiges of civilization in a city becoming increasingly feral, now find themselves on the endangered list themselves.

"I think the city should take a strong look at the libraries and decide if they want them," Betty Babanoury told the Reporter when she left town five years ago. "Because I think they don't"

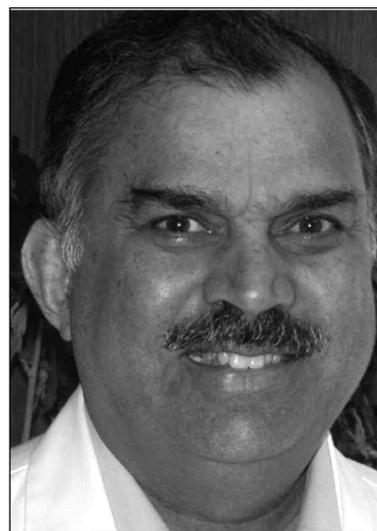
Nothing has happened in the five years since to change her bleak assessment.

Schoellkopf Health Center Residents Welcome New Accommodations

Ruby Dillon, left, a licensed practical nurse at the Schoellkopf Health Center, welcomes resident Rose Maselli to her upgraded private room with its new lighting, flooring, wall coverings and furniture. The new look is part of a \$1.5 million project now under way at Schoellkopf, located on the Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center campus. In addition to the room renovations, all lounge and dining areas are being upgraded and the center's bathing and shower areas are being modernized. The project is scheduled to be completed in October.



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Lewsiton's Conrad Gives His Point of View



Bill Conrad

Hello, my name is Bill Conrad and I would like to formally announce my candidacy to run for re-election to the Lewiston Town Board. I was appointed to the Town Board early last year to fill a seat vacated by Ernie Palmer. Following that I ran a successful campaign to finish the final year of that 4-year term. Thanks to all of the support I received from the community, friends, neighbors, and family, I won that election and am now serving out that final year.

I am running again, this time for a full 4-year term. Over the past year and a half I have worked hard at listening to everyone who has contacted me or stopped me on the street. I have tried to resolve the issues you have made me aware of with the help of my fellow Board members, De-

partment Heads, Town Staff and Committee Members. That belief is one of the ideas that separates me from my opponents, which leads me to my next point. What some are claiming as "their" accomplishments, are more accurately described as the accomplishments of the entire five-member Board and our Town Team. As a Town Board member, I am part of a team and a single vote. I alone do not make things happen, and I am humble enough to know that. It takes many people to make things happen in our Town. I am a leader, a coordinator, a problem solver, a consensus builder and sometimes a motivator. Fortunately, our Town Board has good chemistry, cooperation and communication. We don't always see things the same way, but we are able to discuss the facts and sometimes agree to disagree. It's not personal or political, it's five independent minds with differing opinions, experiences and views hashing it out in the democratic process. As they say, there's no "I" in "Team."

I am also proud of what the Board has accomplished since I have been a member. We have been successful in resolving the Joseph Davis State Park issues, reducing the Town Budget Deficit, Defending our Environment against the CWM expansion, and the Spreading of Equate. Our Board has also worked hard on mending relation-

ships with the leadership in the Village and Art Park as well as our own Department Heads. We are in a much better place than we were last year and I am glad that I have had the opportunity to be a part of it.

Over this past year and a half I have learned quite a bit from my fellow Board members, Town Staff, Department Heads, and residents throughout our great Town. I feel confident that I am even more prepared than before to be a strong Town Board member and to keep moving our Town in the right direction. I have supported the Town Board process being as transparent and fiscally responsible as possible. As always I will remain accessible and responsive to your concerns. I hope to see you this summer as I walk door to door getting to know you as you get to know me.

My experience outside of Town Hall is fairly extensive but well rounded. I am a Licensed Architect, retired U.S. Army officer who proudly served for 24 years. I am a former School Board President, Niagara County Planning Board member, Rivershore Inc. Board member, Orleans-Niagara BOCES Board of Education member, Zoning Board Chairman, WNY Veteran's Housing Coalition Board member, Chairman of the Tower and Wind Energy Committee, Ransomville Free Methodist Church Board Member, ROTC

Instructor at Buffalo State College and Niagara University, and Leadership Niagara Graduate. Currently I work in Construction Management for the Dormitory Authority. I have nearly 30 years of Architectural Design, Planning and Construction Management experience. Of all the current members and those running for the Board I am the only candidate with professional experience in Land Planning, Design and Construction. I believe it's very important to have someone on every municipal Board with this type of experience.

My wife Lynne and I have three biological children, four older adopted children and three foster children. We have been foster parents for over 15 years, caring for more than 135 children during that time. Motorcycle riding is my favorite pastime along with my new hobby...beekeeping.

This is our Town from the River along the Village to the farm fields in Sanborn, and I couldn't ask for a more wonderful place to live and raise my family. Please help me to continue our good work as member of your Town Board. I would be very proud and thankful for your continued support in November.

DEC Releases Final Northern Cricket Frog Recovery Plan to Restore Amphibian's Population

The northern cricket frog will be protected and its populations restored in New York State if the management plan for the amphibian released by the DEC this week is implemented and it works.

The northern cricket frog is New York's only endangered frog and is limited to a handful of breeding populations in southeastern New York.

The largest remaining population of

northern cricket frogs in New York survives at Orange County's Glenmere Lake/Black Meadow habitat.

The plan includes: protecting and managing remaining northern cricket frog popu-



Northern Cricket Frog, or Acris crepitans

lations and habitats and to work with landowners to protect suitable and unoccupied habitats and facilitate the colonization of these sites by northern cricket frogs.

Recovery plans are not required for endangered species in New York State. However, under regulations implementing the New York Endangered Species Law, a recovery plan can be prepared to provide guidance for activities to improve the status of the species and establish a strategy for securing the species and removing it from the NYS Endangered Species List.

DEC biologists will now develop specific steps to implement the recovery plan, beginning with research to quantify the upland habitat requirements of the frog.

The final Northern Cricket Frog Recovery Plan is now available on DEC's website at

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7120.html>.

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As Recycling Industry Crumbles Nationally Dyster's Plan Here Becomes More Bizarre

Mike Hudson

Timing is everything, a wise man once said, and the timing of the Niagara Falls Mayor Paul A. Dyster's recycling initiative couldn't possibly have been worse.

Startup costs of \$2.3 million to buy and deliver some 10,000 new blue (64 gallon) refuse totes and (96 gallon) recycling green totes and \$78,000 a year for city employees to oversee the program came at a time when the recycling industry is slumping badly.

As more and more paper, glass, plastic and metal for recycling has come onto the market, prices for the commodities have dropped precipitously.

Executives at the nation's largest recycling company, Waste Management, announced in April that tumbling prices of recycled materials and lower recycling volumes cut into its revenue in the first quarter, leading the company to lower its profit forecasts. Executives also pointed to worsening economics around handling glass, which has become a money loser for the Houston-based company.

Four of the company's largest recycling plants were closed earlier this year.

The average prices of recycled commodities fell 14 percent from January to March, a decline that was hard for Waste Management to absorb, Chief Executive David Steiner said.

"Recycling is in a crisis," Steiner said in an interview. "It isn't profitable for us, and we have to react to that by shutting down plants."

Steiner said Waste Management's recycling division lost \$13 million during the quarter. More plant closures are planned, he said.

"It's as low as it's ever been, but we haven't seen any indication of a bottom," Steiner said of prices for recycled materials.

Market values of used plastics have fallen sharply, a decline some in the industry have attributed to lower crude oil prices, which have pushed down the cost of producing new plastic and left manufacturers less keen to work with recycled material. Slower economic growth in China and other countries also has reduced demand for used paper and other recycled commodities. Even prices of used metals are down.

"If people feel that recycling is important — and I think they do, increasingly — then we are talking about a nationwide cri-



sis," said Steiner.

Dyster's recycling program went into effect of August of 2014.

Although Dyster claimed the program would save the city \$500,000 annually, it quickly became apparent that the city would lose money. Small businesses faced increased costs and residents faced fines and other sanctions for not complying. Outraged taxpayers, led by Third Street businessman and longtime Dyster supporter Craig Avery, called publicly for the resignation of Donna Owens who Dyster credited for creating the plan.

Prior to the new trash program being implemented, the recycling rate in Niagara Falls was the lowest in Western New York at an estimated four percent. A 47 percent increase announced by Dyster brought the rate up to just below 6 percent, which is still about the lowest in the region.

In 2013, the last full year prior to Dyster's bright trash idea, the city paid Modern Disposal Inc. of Lewiston \$2.9 million for trash collection.

In 2014, with the recycling scheme going into effect in August, the cost to city residents was \$3.1 million.

And, in 2015, the first full year city residents will get to enjoy the fruits of Dyster's garbage collecting scheme, reliable projec-

tions show that taxpayers will be socked with a whopping \$3.6 million to \$3.8 million tab.

And that doesn't even count the \$2.3 million the city paid for the ridiculously small, micro chipped totes in the first place.

If the average tote lasts 7 years that means in addition to the increased costs, the lessening of services, the loss of 100's of businesses that do not get service, the city must budget for about \$300,000 per year for new totes as old ones are worn out or broken.

Something no one but the Reporter bothered to mention to this date.

That's right there was a decrease in garbage service, a stupid plan for the reversal for the standard tote sizes — with the recycling totes larger than the refuse totes — a decrease in the number of taxpaying businesses that got service, a decrease in bulk trash removal, a decrease in the amount of trash people could throw out, and an increase in price — not counting the totes.

And it was all built around Dyster's claim about the importance of recycling!

Meantime glass, metal and plastic recycling costs around \$240 per ton, almost double what it costs to just throw it away.

Recycling costs vary by city according to a set of factors, including proximity to



The larger one (left) is for recycling and the smaller one (right) is for refuse, the opposite of every other city in America. And even Dyster's moral righteousness about recycling has proven to be false. See Washington Post's investigative series on the bogus claimed benefits of recycling.

landfills, labor costs, amount and method of recycling and real estate prices.

"Recycling has failed as an economic proposition for municipalities," said Jerry Taylor, director of natural resource studies at the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank. "It's not a question of whether we want to pay, it's how do we want to spend scarce resources. Is it worth teachers, firemen, police on the beat?"

John Tierney, a reporter who wrote a controversial and influential 1996 New York Times magazine story titled "Recycling Is Garbage" wrote, "Mandatory recycling programs... offer mainly short-term benefits to a few groups — politicians, public relations consultants, environmental organizations and waste handling corporations -- while diverting money from genuine social and environmental problems. Recycling may be the most wasteful activity in modern America..."

A common statistic cited by recycling critics is that the next 1,000 years-worth of trash would only fill a 35-square mile landfill that is 100 yards deep. Not something you want to live near, of course, but not exactly Earth-swallowing, either.

By creating a problem where none existed, Dyster has led the city into an expensive crisis he refuses to see.

Take my City Hall Website Seriously Please!

A very serious new news website on the serious topic of Niagara Falls City Hall has just been launched by Signor Pete Niagara AKA Pistol Pete, a man of journalistic means by all means.

We don't know why he calls it Niagara News Parody when the website is named <http://www.niagarafall-snynews.com>.

Whether or not he thinks it is parody we prefer to believe every word he

says.

Here is one of the impressive breaking news stories on this informative site.

Woken From Sleep in Council Meeting

By Pete Niagara

In a meeting last week on the issue of parking meters, Charles Walker was roused from his nap as the Mayor announced more unapproved spending.

"Now Wait, Wait, Wait" said

Walker, without a hint of irony. "So is late payment for these meters similar to the penalties for late payment of Property Tax? Or City Taxes? Or School Taxes? Cause if that's the case, I want to see exactly where these spaces are going to be so I can pick out my spot"

The Mayor assured Walker that he would request a change order from the consultants on the next round of no-bid studies.



Charles Walker has unusual parking questions....

Feds Interviewing Witnesses In

Mike Hudson

County spin doctors went into overdrive last week as federal criminal investigators interviewed witnesses and collected evidence relating to the likely illegal removal of dangerous asbestos from the basement of the Shaw Building by a crew of untrained and unskilled welfare recipients.

While County Manager Jeffrey Glatz and Risk Management Director Jennifer Pitarresi said a probe of the case may result in disciplinary action against whomever directed the removal, they maintained that no health risks resulted from the cleanout of the Shaw Building basement, which involved some 20 welfare recipients working for several days over a two week period in May and removing enough possibly contaminated material to fill three dumpsters.

Meanwhile, NYS state investigators informed the county late Thursday that repeated testing of the Shaw site had found no airborne contamination and tests of surfaces found that only a small portion of floor immediately adjacent to a basement door indicated minimally positive tests for surface contamination.

That information, released by the county to local media, came in a telephone conference with asbestos experts employed by the state's Public Employ Safety and Health Bureau (PESH).

PESH also advised the county to continue monitoring via a company licensed in handling asbestos.

The county hired 56 Services Inc., a Buffalo based consulting firm specializing in asbestos and hazardous waste abatement projects. Bill Rutland, president of the county's blue collar worker's union, said that 56 Services should have been called in prior to the project.

"The first thing they did was seal off the door leading to the basement," he said. "If there's no hazard, why would



The dumpster was covered sort of...

the seal off the door?"

A spokesman for the county, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "56 Services is conducting an asbestos survey—something that apparently was never conducted under Public Works Commissioner Kevin O'Brien, despite 15 years' employment with the county during which he acknowledges he was aware of asbestos at the Shaw Building."

The county uses welfare recipients to perform menial jobs in return for benefits, normally sending crews out to mow lawns, pick up litter and do painting jobs, under a state-mandated welfare-to-work requirement. But during the third week of May, 20 workers assigned to the Shaw Building were ordered into the basement and told to remove whatever they found there. The dumpsters were placed in the parking lot, and the workers, carrying everything from old furniture to insulated pipe, walked through the basement door and out to the lot.

Rutland said he believed the activity put his union workers in the building at risk and reported the activity to the state. Members of the public were also in the building at the time the work was taking place, and the welfare workers spent hours in the basement with no overalls, boots, respirators, gloves or even surgical masks to protect them.

Rutland scoffed at the county officials' talk of "disciplinary action."

"The federal government does not have criminal investigators looking into this in the interest of taking someone's job," he said. "They clearly think that crimes have been committed here."

A top county official we spoke with noted, however, no individuals from those agencies have indicated any criminal investigation underway to county leadership.

County officials also claim that PESH testing of material Rutland says is as-



looks like asbestos to us....

bestos actually turned out to be a commercial spill removing product called "Speedi Dri." That product is used to clean up oil, grease, anti-freeze, and solvents—materials all commonly found in automobile garages.

"It's disturbing that Mr. Rutland, an auto mechanic on the county payroll, can't recognize a product he is supposed to be around and use pretty much every day," a source close to Glatz's office said.

Last week, Adam Buchbinder of the Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigations Division, and NYS DEC Environmental Crimes Investigator Charles Lohr interviewed a number of witnesses in the case.

Attempts to reach Buchbinder and Lohr at press time were unsuccessful, but their investigation comes on the heels of probes into the asbestos removal by the Niagara County Sheriff's Dept. Crime Scene Investigations Unit, the state Department of Environmental Conservation's Bureau of Environmental Crime, and the U.S. Dept. of Labor.

County officials should have known about the hazardous conditions in the basement of the Shaw Building, an 84 year old edifice that once served as the county sanatorium.

In 2002, monitoring uncovered toxic levels of asbestos, mostly from the crumbling insulation placed around the building's plumbing in the days before the danger of asbestos was known.

The basement door was padlocked and the asbestos hazard was largely forgotten until last year when the county's maintenance supervisor, Thomas Williams, ordered two county laborers (AFSCME union) to go down in the basement and hook up a sink he wanted installed on the first floor.

The men refused, and Rutland became involved.

Rutland said he and Williams discussed the asbestos hazard at length.

Another way to hook up the sink was found that didn't involve going into the basement and, again, the matter was forgotten until the welfare workers were ordered in last month.

County officials privately acknowledged being concerned about Williams' activities, and one suggested he may very likely face disciplinary action based on Rutland's claims.

County investigators' crosshairs also seem to be lined up on O'Brien, who, they claim, acknowledged to Glatz that he was aware of asbestos at Shaw but had never conducted a required asbestos survey of the building.

Conditions in the basement were bad.

"There were only a few lights, spaced about 50 feet apart, and unless you were right by them you couldn't see anything in the dark," said Ryan Mack, one of the cleanup

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Lewiston Public Library, 305 S. Eighth St., Lewiston

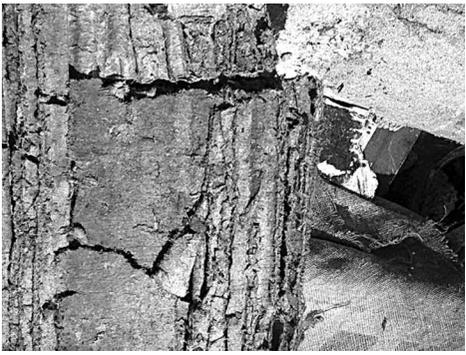
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and more asbestos...

workers. “Then the basement turned into a crawlspace and there wasn’t any light there at all.

The dust was thick in the air, and became worse as workers began moving items out for disposal, he added.

Federal law provides strict guidelines on the responsibility of employers where asbestos exposure is concerned.

“Where there is exposure, employers are required to further protect workers by establishing regulated areas, controlling certain work practices and instituting engineering controls to reduce the airborne levels,” the department warns. “The employer is required to ensure exposure is reduced by using administrative controls and provide for the wearing of personal protective equipment. Medical monitoring of workers is also required when legal limits and exposure times are exceeded.”

Clearly, none of these protocols was followed by whomever ordered 20 welfare recipients into the basement.

Since the story of the asbestos abatement project was first reported on June 9, triggering the expanded investigation into the matter, county officials have insinuated



and more....

that asbestos laden objects were “planted” at the scene to make the situation look worse than it actually was.

“This was not an asbestos abatement project. It was a ‘moving some old furniture’ project,” Pitarresi told the county Legislature last week after Niagara Falls Legislator Dennis Virtuoso asked for an update on the project.

She did not indicate who ordered the welfare workers into the basement, or who removed the padlock that had closed it off for more than a decade, since evidence of asbestos contamination was first discovered there.

A release sent out by the county’s information officer, Christian W. Peck, claims that officials were told verbally by state Public Employee Safety and Health investigators



yeah... more asbestos...

that no significant asbestos contamination was uncovered.

County officials’ statements and press releases have contained information that makes it seem as though Rutland’s concerns are overblown.

In the end, it will be neither the officials nor Rutland’s assessment of what happened that matters. The answers provided by a multi-agency criminal investigation.

In a further development, several county and welfare workers have contacted the Reporter claiming that it is common practice for certain county workers assigned to oversee the welfare workfare project to steal scrap metal to sell privately, take free food from the food kitchen and to secrete supplies meant for county projects for their personal use.

One worker said, “one guy ----- remodeled his entire home with county supplies stolen from the job.”

Another witness said he watched a certain county worker take the scrap metal from the Shaw Building job and put it in his vehicle instead of the dumpster.

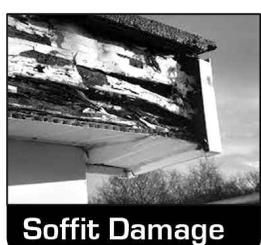
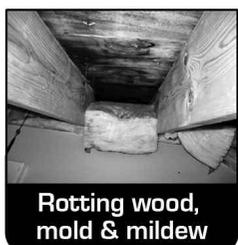
County officials indicated to the Reporter that they were well aware of these allegations and were conducting an investigation into this matter.

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF A DOMESTIC LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY

ATTIVO LLC has been formed as a limited liability company (LLC), with an office located in Wheatfield, Niagara County by filing Articles of Organization with the New York Secretary of State (NYSS) on June 16, 2015. NYSS is designated as agent for the LLC upon whom process against it maybe served. NYSS will mail a copy of any process against it served upon him or her ATTIVO LLC, 3877 Loveland Road, Wheatfield, NY 14120. The purpose is to engage in any lawful business practice.

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Preserve Our Parks Launches Campaign Opposing Zip Line

**Mike Hudson &
Frank Parlato**

It's like déjà vu all over again.

Preserve Our Parks, a grassroots Canadian organization that worked hand in glove with the Niagara Falls Reporter in opening up to competitive bidding the tour boat business once dominated by Jimmy Glynn's Maid of the Mist, has embarked on a new crusade, this time to stop the development of a zip line attraction on the Canadian side of the gorge without proper vetting and environmental study.

"Unfortunately, Niagara Parks, as an agency of the Ontario government, comes under the Ministry of Tourism," wrote James Bannister on behalf of the organization. "Throughout the life of the NPC there has been conflict between the mandate for stewardship and environmentalism and the perceived necessity (for reasons of revenue generation) of including in NPC operations a number of 'tourism and adventure attractions.'"

The proposed attraction would consist of four zip lines running approximately 2200 feet along the west wall of the Niagara Gorge, from the Grand View Market in Queen Victoria Park to the base of the old Ontario Power Company generating station facing the Horseshoe Falls.

Harnessed tourists attached to the line will be able to descend the gorge in front of the American Falls in record time and provide an experience that will undoubtedly be thrilling.

The attraction will be clearly visible to passengers on the Hornblower Niagara Cruises and the Maid of the Mist excursion boats, and also visitors to the New York State Park on the east side of the gorge.

"To say that it will not enhance the beauty of the gorge is an understatement," Bannister wrote.

A second attraction, an aerial adventure course, will allow customers to move from tree to tree using log ladders, rope swings, scrambling walls, hanging nets, spinning logs, wobbly bridges, tightropes, monkey bars and zip lines rising above the forest canopy, is also planned above the Niagara Whirlpool at Thompson Point.

While most details of the attractions have not been made public, it is known that if approval is granted by the Ontario government, the project will be designed, built and operated by a partnership consisting of Wild-Play Ltd., of British Columbia, a developer of zip line / aerial adventure parks, and a startup company called Niagara Adventure Excursions Inc., founded in 2013, whose corporate officers have not been publicly identified.

The Reporter has identified at least one of the corporate owners of the secretive Niagara Adventure Excursions, whose own website names no board or directors or owners – while bragging that the company has loads of development experience- as the Di-Cosimo family - owners of the 965 room Hilton Hotel and Suites/ Fallsview in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

"The nature of the 'Zipline and Aerial Adventure Course' is clear. It is a tourist attraction and only that," Bannister wrote. "It



Visitors to Grand Falls, New Brunswick, can view the water from a new zipline that transverses the falls

will be run for profit -- a great deal of profit -- in which we hope NPC will share. However, in the interest of transparency, projected revenue, profit and profit-sharing figures should be released before final approval is given."

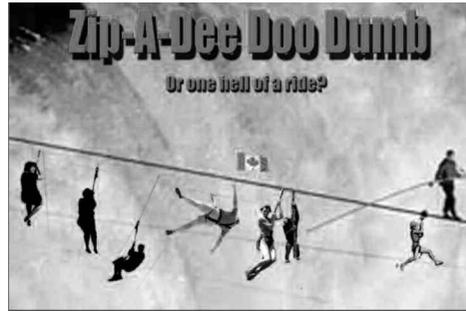
In late May, the NPC announced they received approval from the Province of Ontario to enter into an agreement with Niagara Adventure Excursions to develop and operate the zip line attractions. However, the NPC acknowledged that additional studies are required before a final agreement can be signed and construction can begin.

To date the NPC has downplayed any potential adverse visual impacts the zip lines and their riders may have on the views of millions of visitors to Niagara Falls who are drawn here because of the visual resources of the area, instead focusing on the views zip line riders will enjoy.

Bannister said Preserve Our Parks objects to the process by which the project has been developed and approved.

"We object to the lack of public input and lack of transparency," he wrote. "Even more strongly do we object to the approval of this project without any assessment of its impact on the environment of the Niagara Falls World Heritage Site, designated by UNESCO as being in danger."

"The new zip line attraction at Grand View Marketplace and aerial adventure course at Thompson Point will provide visitors with a breathtaking, authentic Niagara Falls and Niagara Parks experience," said NPC chair Janice Thomson. "These two new



attractions are in keeping with Niagara Parks other natural attractions and provide another unique way to interpret the falls, the Niagara Gorge and all the lands along the Niagara Parkway, without impacting views or access enjoyed by other visitors to the falls."

Preserve Our Parks was remarkably effective in organizing against the NPC, a campaign that led to the state of the art Hornblower Niagara Cruises vessels being available to tourists on the Canadian side of the river.

The current NPC board was put in place in the aftermath of the Maid of the Mist scandal, and they and the developers of the project would do well to make sure that everything is open and above board this time around.

In a letter to the Niagara Falls Reporter last week, Bannister wrote, "Your article (Will Canadian Zip Line Blemish New York And Canadian Views of Falls? By Frank Parlato and James Hufnagel published JUNE 9, 2015) was a big factor in spurring our group to send a protest to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

"I'll keep you posted as to any response we get.

"Jim Bannister"

Gee whiz.

This was how the Maid of the Mist lease was unraveled.

Back in 2009, when Jim Bannister and Pat Mangoff and the rest of the group at Preserve our Parks contacted the Reporter with almost the identical message.

The powerful activist group Preserve Our Parks wrote to the premier, the Integrity Commissioner and the minister of tourism "demanding" the lease be sent back for competitive bidding.

Soon enough, the Ontario Public Serv-

ice Employees Union joined in and called upon the minister of tourism to dissolve the NPC.

Union president Warren "Smokey" Thomas, posted our stories on union websites and announced to the Canadian media that the Niagara parks are "deteriorating while the commission makes irresponsible spending decisions," like its "decision to renew the lease of the Maid of the Mist without going to tender."

Alcatraz Media spokesperson Bill Windsor filed suit with the Ontario Superior Court seeking to set aside Glynn's lease and let other companies, including his own, bid on it.

Kim Craitor, a member of Parliament whose Niagara Falls riding takes in all NPC parklands, announced plans to reintroduce a bill requiring openness from provincial agencies. The secret no-bid lease renewal, Craitor said, "doesn't shine a positive light on the parks commission. (The Niagara parks are) the jewel of our community. These types of things start to tarnish that jewel."

NPC Commissioner Bob Gale, who owns a chain of gas stations in Ontario, was the whistle-blowing commissioner who went public (to the Reporter), alleging that then NPC Chairman Jim Williams, Vice Chairman Archie Katzman and NPC General Manager John Kernahan worked furtively to ensure that world-famous Ripley Entertainment -- which expressed interest in bidding on the lease -- was excluded, while simultaneously neglecting to tell other commissioners about Ripley's interest.

The Reporter continued to write stories (some 80,000 words). Finally the Toronto Globe and Mail picked up one of our stories about how the rent to the Maid of the Mist was secretly reduced while they publicly claimed they had raised the rent. The Globe secured an accountant that proved our assertion that the rent was reduced by at least \$600,000 per year.

The rest is history.

Now in the exact same order Preserve Our Parks (there is nothing like these folks on the New York Side – so don't hold your breath- Americans round these parts don't have their kind of gumption) is involved in a story that we wrote that we "smelled something funny about these zip lines."

They may be great or they may make the falls into even more of a circus side show.

But where are the visual simulation studies needed to show what this is going to look like when you have hundreds of people daily gliding down the gorge in front of the falls?

Where is the disclosure of revenue sharing in the Zip Line deal – also absent in the Maid of the Mist deal that got it set aside.

It's like Déjà vu.

All, over, again.

WHOSE SIDE ARE THEY ON?



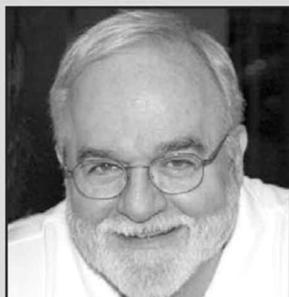
Archie Katzman



Jim Williams



James Glynn



Bill Windsor

Many are wondering, why, instead of trying to get the best deal for the park, did Niagara Parks Commission Vice Chairman Archie Katzman and Chairman Jim Williams secretly work to get the best deal for Lewiston businessman James Glynn for his Maid of the Mist boat lease. Bill Windsor is taking on the Maid of the Mist.



"The first requisite of a sound monetary system is that it put the least possible power over the quantity or quality of money in the hands of the politicians."

Henry Hazlitt

Canadian Zip Lines to Trash Niagara Gorge, State Parks taking notes

James Hufnagel

As readers of the Niagara Falls Reporter know, the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) has received conditional approval from the province of Ontario to contract with start-up outfit, Niagara Adventure Excursions, Inc., and Wildplay, a British Columbia zip line developer, for the construction of four zip lines, descending 2,200 feet from the Grand View Marketplace (near the Hornblower docks) across the American Falls and in, through and down the Niagara Gorge.

In addition, an "aerial adventure course" is slated for the Whirlpool area, consisting of more zip lines, "log ladders, rope swings, scrambling walls, hanging nets, spinning logs, wobbly bridges, tightropes, monkey bars and other games."

The available courses will be classified with respect to intensity, including "Kids", "Classic" and "Extreme".

The intrusiveness and disruption such diversions would impose on the gorge experience would be considerable. Imagine taking in such a circus spectacle at Whirlpool State Park. One of the few pristine areas left, its serenity punctuated by non-stop screams attendant to such thrill rides.

It's almost unimaginable, but it may become a reality as early as next spring if all



When zip lining in the gorge, it's advisable to bring a change of underwear.

goes according to the Parks Commission's schedule.

Utilizing Orwellian doublespeak that rings familiar with residents on this side of the border, having endured decades of self-serving propaganda from local politicians and State Parks apologists ourselves, the Canadian parks bureaucracy worked hard to justify the ill-advised projects, demonstrating that greed and contempt for nature are not restricted to the U.S. side.

"These two new attractions are in keeping with Niagara Parks' other natural attractions and provide another unique way to

interpret the Falls, the Niagara Gorge and all the lands along the Niagara Parkway," stated one parks commissioner, "without impacting views or access enjoyed by other visitors to the Falls," laughably characterizing them as "eco-tourism".

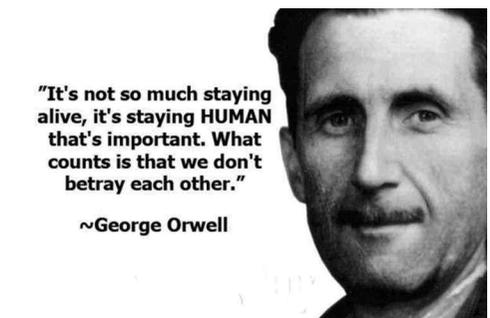
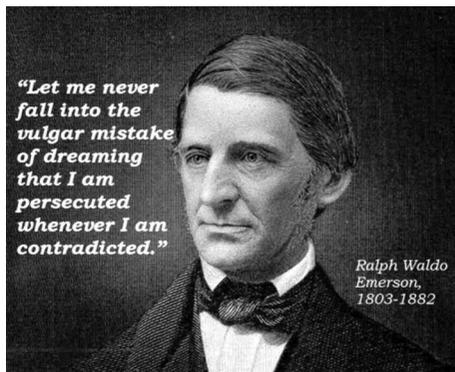
"Our goal is to provide both adventure and educational opportunities as guests explore nature..." said Niagara Excursions' Lindsay DiCosimo, citing the new "human-powered, eco-adventure" carnival rides.

"The new zip line at Grand View Marketplace and the aerial adventure course at Thompson Point (Whirlpool) represent advanced designs that will enhance access to the local natural beauty of Niagara Parks," added Wildplay's "Chief Experience Officer".

Of course, we're hardly in a position to point fingers at the Canadians. Between

south Robert Moses Parkway "removal", the Niagara Falls State Park Landscape "Improvements" and Glynn's new Maid of the Mist "winter quarters", State Parks has done a fantastic job managing the 80% of city waterfront it owns to enrich Glynn, Delaware North and Albany, a carefully-planned strategy to direct eight million tourists a year into the state's park via the Moses, where they park, eat, sightsee, purchase souvenirs and then leave on the same parkway after three or four hours, without need or reason to enter the city and dine in a rainforest.

Not being the cash cow that Niagara Falls State Park is, the gorge had always been an afterthought for State Parks, at least until Glynn needed a new boatyard. It appears that they've begun nibbling around the edges, although not in a good way.



State Parks Fills Niagara Gorge With Junk... Or is it "Art"?

James Hufnagel

Even though three international bridges, two hydropower dams, an observation tower, a boat yard, the remnants of a railroad and its platforms, jet boats, Homeland Security signage, numerous invasive species and an overhead cable car clutter up the place, it's still possible to experience awe and wonder while hiking through parts of the Niagara Gorge.

Here and there, magical places along its seven-mile length remain unspoiled. Raging rapids, thick forest and soaring rock walls combine to overwhelm the senses and evoke feelings of amazement that such natural beauty exists right here in our own backyard.

Unfortunately, however, ill-considered encroachments on the ancient landscape of the Niagara Gorge being perpetrated by its supposed steward, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Places, threaten to further detract from what's left of



A large picnic area, deep in the formerly natural Niagara Gorge, courtesy of the NYS Office of Parks, Wreckreation and Historic Preservation.

nature down there. It seems that they're determined to transform the Niagara Gorge into some kind of domesticated venue resembling



Hint: when having a cook-out in the Niagara Gorge, don't forget charcoal, lighter fluid and matches.

a neighborhood park... or is the state agency making a subtle artistic statement?

Outdoor enthusiasts enter the Niagara Gorge at the Artpark trailhead on a lengthy suburban driveway of freshly-laid crushed stone. At the very spot where Niagara Falls got its start 12,000 years ago, a relative trickle only 35 feet high, a large boulder is painted



A new stairway in the gorge near Artpark, installed by State Parks, blends in nicely with the gorge scenery, don't you think?

black for reasons unknown, framed at ground-level around its perimeter with two-by-fours.

Further on, a crude inlaid stone-slab stairway with ugly plywood railing extends just 30 feet or so down off the trail, serving little purpose other than to hasten erosion.

The piece de resistance, however, is ahead on the upper trail. Ten minutes into the gorge you come upon, inexplicably, surrounded on all sides by nature's glory, a lone charcoal grill situated in the middle of a large gravel (picnic?) area, offset by a garbage can.

Is this tableau another example of Artpark avant-garde? Perhaps a stage for offbeat performance art - we can see it now - as part of their summer internship, art majors grilling burgers in the middle of the Niagara Gorge, entitled "The Banality of Human Activity in the Midst of Nature's Splendor".

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Niagara Sports Tournament, Inc.

6/30/15, 7/7/15

Hamister Has Building Permit, Still Seeking Financing

Tony Farina

Now that the Hamister Group has obtained a building permit for 310 Rainbow Blvd. from Niagara Falls City Hall, can a ground breaking be imminent?

Well, it would seem so barring another last-minute surprise which is more than a little possible given the history of the “life-saving” Hamister hotel that was billed by city and state officials as the project that will save downtown, nothing short of a “transformational” hotel tower, according to Mayor Paul Dyster. Of course, that was four years ago and before it was scaled back to a Hyatt Place from the original grandiose design that had everything and then some.

But as we reported last week, there are still questions about private (i.e. Hamister money) financing even for the scaled-down 128-room Hyatt Place the cost of which has ballooned to nearly \$36 million from the original tag of \$27 million. Go figure?

And Hamister’s inflated per-room cost of the Hyatt (\$285,000) Place is discouraging local investors, as we reported last week, and even with more than \$7 million in taxpayer help committed to the project, Hamister reportedly still hasn’t finalized the financing (he wants to borrow more than it will cost) although he has the building permit in hand and a process, according to Dyster, that will see a ground breaking be-

fore the September primary—or maybe sooner---so Dyster can run for re-election with at least a shovel in the ground if nothing else.

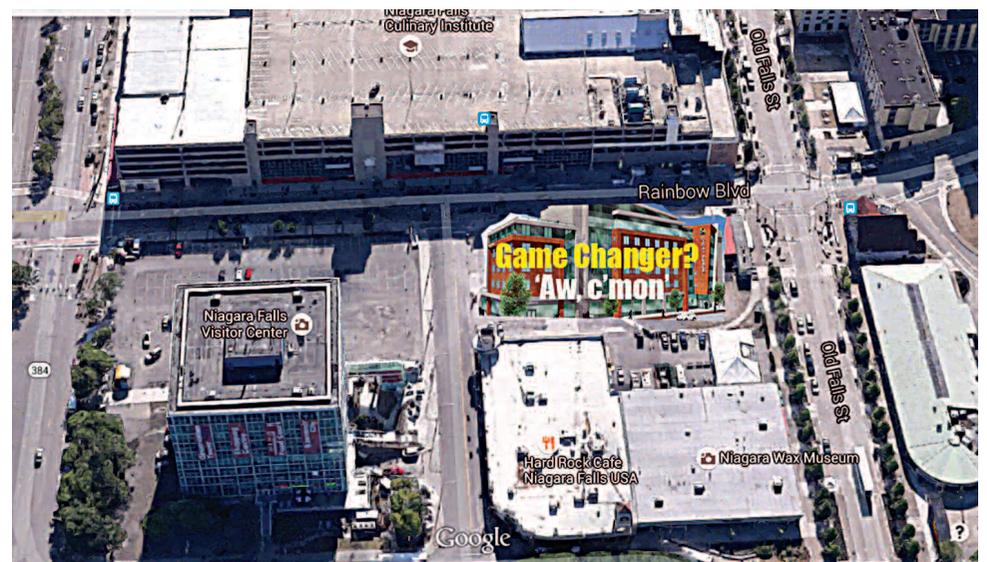
Meanwhile, the Hamister Group has selected R&P Oak Hill Development, LLC as the general contractor for the Hyatt Place hotel, a contractor Mark Hamister said in a statement that “we have worked with in the past and have been extremely satisfied with the process and end result.”

Well, we hope Hamister gets the financing in place for his “transformational” Niagara Falls project that he’s putting together on the backs of taxpayers. Hamister is known as a pretty good fundraiser, especially when it comes to donating to politicians. He has been a strong donor to Gov. Andrew Cuomo who has been a big supporter of the Niagara Falls project and helped convince the council to support the deal, and now Hamister is showing he can cross the political aisle when it comes to fundraising as he’s part of a group of big hitters who will host a fundraising event in August for Republican presidential hopeful Sen. Marco Rubio in Buffalo. If Rubio wins the White House, maybe Hamister can build a hotel in Washington courtesy of D. C. taxpayers and the president he helped elect.

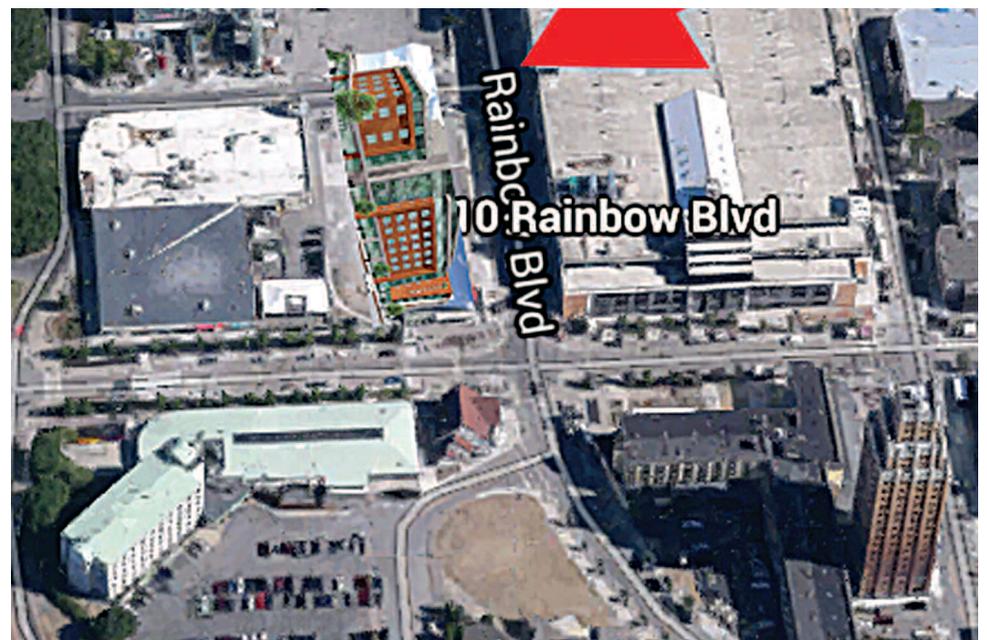
Or so it goes.



Here’s about how the Hyatt Place will fit in on Rainbow Blvd.



Here is an aerial view of the Tippin Point development (?)



We scunched in the Hamister hotel just like it will be in real life.



There she blows --- at the tip end of the arrow - the tipping point!

Game Changing Tipping Point Hotel to come to DC?



What we were promised....



2013 Downscaled Version



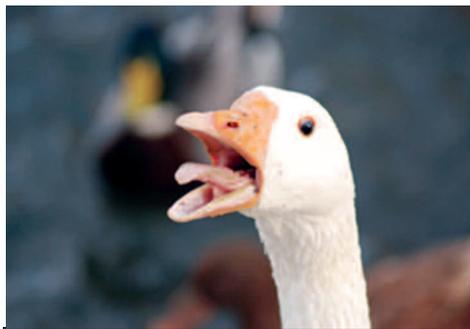
2014 Downscaled Version



2016 Version?

Constantly getting smaller yet allegedly costing more....

And the Grass Don't Pay No Mind... Tall grass in Jayne Park no 'high' for Island residents



Gus the Goose

As my faithful readers know I'm a resident goose of Jayne Park on Cayuga Island that was forced to go into hiding shortly after I criticized Mayor Dyster's Jayne Park "restoration plan."

My fellow fowl sources informed me last week that the Jayne Park grass, while not as "high as an elephant's eye" like the corn crop sung about in the legendary musical, "Oklahoma," is higher than a goose



As of press time the grass is about a foot high at Jayne Park.

hindquarters.

In other words the park greenery now reaches above 12 inches and in some areas along the "asphalt trail" the plentiful weeds and sparse grass reaches skyward for close to 16 inches. When grass reaches a height that even hinders the walkabout of your average goose, well, you know that it's become uncomfortably high for your average human out for a stroll and a little fresh air.

While Mayor Dyster and his chief pyramid builder, Tom DeSantis, designed the park work - work that the city residents paid for (a matching grant means half [\$145,000] paid by the city) and work that the Cayuga Island neighborhood never wanted - the mayor and planner couldn't have cared less as to whether the park was maintained with even minimal grass cutting.

The fact is that long before the park "restoration" was done, going back to 2009 as Dyster and DeSantis talked up their park plans, Cayuga Island residents asked that the work be called off and that the mayor work harder to simply keep the park routinely maintained: grass cut; litter picked up; and, trees trimmed. That's all they asked for. They didn't get the minimal maintenance then and they aren't getting it now.

And that's because the Dyster plan for Jayne Park was never about making the park more natural or more inviting and user friendly. It was about spending Greenway grant money and taxpayer money to satisfy friendly construction contracts and political egos at the expense of the residents...and the current condition of the park is proof of that

assertion.

My contacts along the city hall "goose vine" tell me that park grass across the city is now going uncut. In fact the city is falling so far behind in its routine grass maintenance that overtime is being paid for what was, just last year, regular workday grass cutting maintenance.

It's all a shame and so unnecessary; the damage to Jayne Park, the waste of taxpayer funds, the lies from city hall and the devaluing of the Cayuga Island neighborhood. If I were still a Cayuga Island resident I'd be plenty honked off...but then again I'm a goose and most city residents are sheep.



Gus, the Goose's Artistic representation entitled: "Jayne Park in September".



It's a Beautiful Morning
When you say 18th Street and Pine Avenue to most people here, it doesn't immediately conjure up a picture of God blessed natural serenity epitomized by the fresh morning sun, emerald green flora or the magnificent beauty of a young four-point Whitetail buck, his velvet antlers and spindly legs telling clues to both his age and the season of the year. This is a Niagara Falls sight that would have been recognizable to some of our earliest residents, but it growing more and more scarce by the day. Thanks to our good friend Mario Albert for submitting this photo taken from one of his properties on 18th St.

DENNIS BROCHEY &
(Lewiston Town Supervisor)
MARK BRIGLIO
(Lewiston Town Deputy Supervisor)

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What to Look for in the Hamister Hotel

The Hamister hotel contract with the City of Niagara Falls and the New York State Agency, USA Niagara Development Corp. was filed in late December 2013 with the Niagara Falls city clerk.

At 155 pages, the contract provides that Hamister would apply for his hotel franchise agreement by Jan. 11, 2014, have financing in place by May 11, 2014 and start construction by Aug. 17, 2014.

None of that happened.

But a clause in the contract gave Hamister more time: "one year and three months more time" to decide if he can/wants to build the hotel - until the Spring of 2015.

That too passed.

Then there was another clause called an "Automatic Extension of Second Contingency Period Under Certain Circumstances," which relates to the present tenants of 310 Rainbow, the lot which Hamister is to build his hotel.

John and Debbie Guido are tenants and they pay \$27,000 per year to the city, and use the lot park about 60,000 cars during summer on the unpaved lot.

The lease with Guido and the City of Niagara Falls reads that the city "may terminate the agreement with 30 days written notice if (city) intends to build a structure."

Those are the exact words in the contract – which you can read online on our website.

The Hamister contract (which you can also read online ----) with the City of Niagara Falls and USA Niagara reads that, should Guido fail to vacate, the Hamister contract is extended for two more years, until 2017, without Hamister losing control of the site.

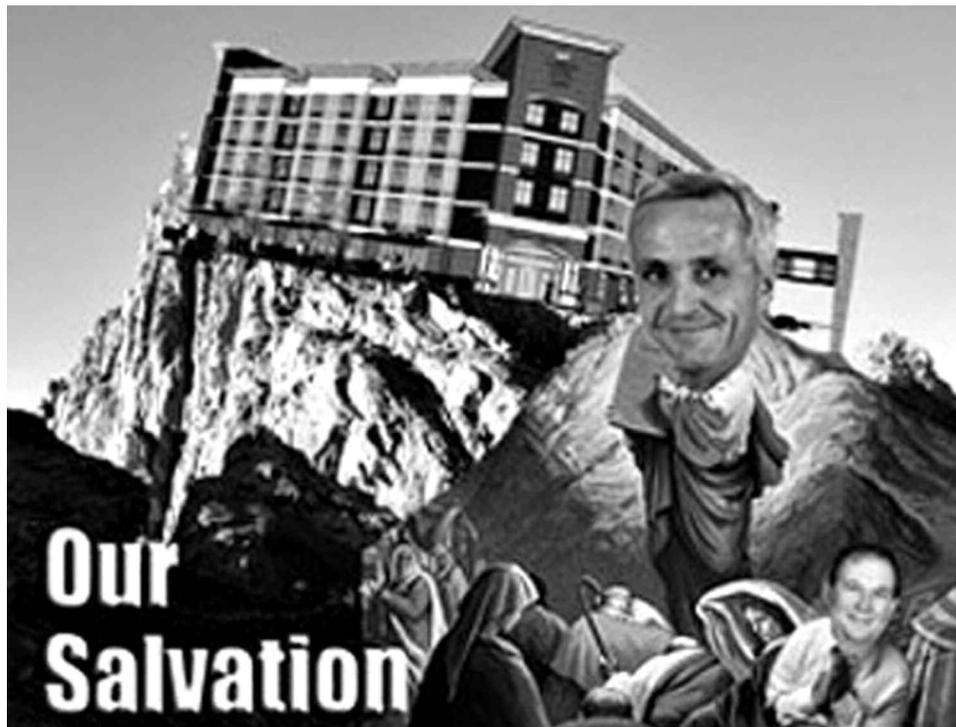
The contract with Hamister further reads that if Hamister loses his financing, or loses his hotel franchise, because Guido delays vacating the lot, Hamister can cancel the deal and get form the city and the state up to \$780,000 in lost monies, or he can permit the city and/or USA Niagara to borrow money for him to build his hotel.

Last week, the Niagara Gazette reported that the Dyster administration gave Guido his required 30 day notice to vacate since Hamister filed for a building permit and the city claims it intends to build a structure (Hamister's hotel) on the site.

Sources say Guido has retained a lawyer and intends to stay put... perhaps wisely since it is clear that as of last week Hamister did not have financing to build what he claims is a \$36 million hotel that is really an \$18 million hotel (by all construction standards).

The Guidos surely do not want to lose their \$600,000 per summer parking lot revenue on a bogus plan to build.

Or said another way, the Guidos do not want to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars this season so that Paul Dyster can have a golden shovel groundbreaking press event –



but with no hotel being built.

But, since the contract with Hamister calls for a fee to be paid to Hamister of more than three quarters of a million dollars if Guido does not vacate the lot, perhaps everyone wins if Guido stays put.

Even if no one else will report this, why shouldn't the intelligent readers who come to the Niagara Falls Reporter for information not learn about the potential back deals that less intelligent readers don't care to bother their little heads about?

After all why would they put it in the contract about paying Hamister if Guido does not back out if that is not a possibility?

The deal therefore seems to be falling into one of three options:

1. Guido actually leaves and Dyster/Hamister and maybe even Gov. Cuomo have that "golden shovel press event" just before primary day.

They will move a little earth around, take a lot of pictures; and gushing stories will be written about the great development (actually a small Hyatt Place).

The primary comes and goes with Dyster crowing about the Hamister "tipping point" hotel development finally beginning (thanks to him).

But no real work will be done, including the essential putting in the foundational footers this year. Then, as election comes near, Dyster will announce that the work will begin in the spring since winter is almost here.

Hamister will have the winter to try to get funding.

After the election it won't matter if Hamister builds or not.

If Dyster loses he won't care and if he wins what difference does it make if Hamister builds or not? Maybe he will give the \$600,000 per year parking lot to Hamister.

2. Guido does not vacate the lot and

Dyster puts the blame on Guido and says Hamister would have started but for Guido and that Dyster will get his law department (actually Hodgson Russ, Buffalo lawyers) to get them out, by golly.

And Hamister will start in the spring, you betcha.

3. Hamister really starts the project. For real. You will know if this is true if he builds the footers and starts framing of the hotel this year and gets the roof on.

Please stay tuned....

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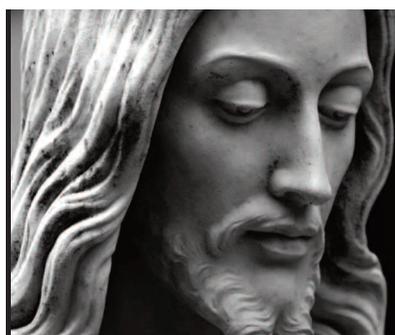
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"Such was the will of the Father that his Son, blessed and glorious, whom he gave to us, and who was born for us, should by his own blood, sacrifice, and oblation, offer himself on the altar of the cross, not for himself, by whom "all things were made,"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

Accardo Calls for Action on City's Abandoned Housing Problem

Mike Hudson

The recent discovery of a woman's murdered and dismembered body in an abandoned house on Willow Avenue has once again brought to the fore the problems created by the presence of more than 700 vacant homes and businesses here.

And mayoral candidate John Accardo says he can offer up a solution.

Over the past half century, the loss of jobs here as factories closed or relocated resulted in a drastic population loss in Niagara Falls, from more than 100,000 in 1960 to 49,000 or fewer today.

The result has been having to maintain far more infrastructure — roads, sewers and other utilities — than is normally needed for a population of that size. A side effect has been the proliferation of abandoned buildings in every section of the city, including stable neighborhoods such as DeVeaux and LaSalle.

The traditional method of dealing with these vacant structures has been to wait until they are seized for back taxes and then put them on a list for demolition.

Ironically, many of these buildings are salvageable when the owner walks away, but soon fall into disrepair and neglect. By the time they come up on the city's list, most are suited only for the wrecking ball.

"What we need is a thorough inventory



A house neglected.

of all the abandoned houses in the city," Accardo said. "We need to determine what can be saved, and take steps to preserve those as best as we can."

Accardo cited an abandoned house on Weston Avenue not far from Hyde Park as an example.

"This home is in an otherwise nice neighborhood," he said. "If the home were restored somebody would surely want to live there."

He's proposed putting together a volunteer force, made up of block club members

and neighbors of the houses in question.

"They have an interest in this because one of these house can drag down property values for the entire area," he said.

Roger Spurbach, who headed up the block clubs here for many years and maintains a strong interest in conditions in the city, said Accardo's idea is a good one.

"You get one abandoned house on a street and it's like having a tooth knocked out," he said. "It's unsightly to begin with, and then the ones around it start to get wiggly. Before too long they start falling out."

In his decades of involvement, Spurbach said, he's seen block after block and neighborhood after neighborhood slide downhill with what began as a single abandoned house. Canvassing the neighbors near one such former residence, Spurbach and Accardo were pleasantly surprised by the number of people who said they would gladly take part in cleaning up the place, inside and out.

"We could fill a truck up with garbage from a couple of these places and drop it off at City Hall," Spurbach laughed.

But he'd be the first to tell you that the problem of abandoned housing is no laughing matter in a declining city such as Niagara Falls. Two boys were killed in a fire on 19th Street a few years back while exploring a vacant open house. Drug addicts regularly use them as places to use, drug dealers use them as office, prostitutes use them as ersatz bor-

dellos, thieves use them to hide stolen goods and as we saw earlier this month, psychopathic serial killers use them as a place to dump bodies.

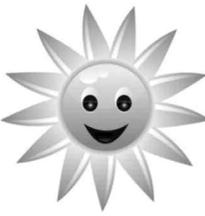
For his part, Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster, while promoting the Hamister Hotel and the Wonderfalls hotels, and cricket fields, has done little to alleviate the problem. Seemingly more interested in the housing provided to the penguin population at the Aquarium of Niagara than he is about neighborhood conditions for the people who twice elected him, Dyster has kept to the list system and seen anywhere from a dozen to 25 empty houses razed in each of the eight years he's sat in the mayor's office.

An attempt to "save" an abandoned house and put it on the real estate market here blew up in his face when incompetent workers from Isaiah 61, a religious not for profit heavily subsidized by Niagara Falls taxpayers under the Dyster regime, removed load bearing walls that allowed the entire structure to collapse into the basement.

Accardo said that Dyster's efforts simply haven't been good enough.

"There are more abandoned buildings in the city right now than there were on the day he first took office," the former city councilman said. "He's actually promoting the construction of new low income housing here that will drive the market down even further."

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Use of Casino Revenue

Anna Howard

Quick, you have five seconds to think of a single, major, positive, game-changing project or expenditure that the Dyster administration has carried out with casino revenue!

One, two, three, four... five.

Couldn't think of a thing, could you? That's okay because neither could the Reporter.

It didn't have to be this way.

There have been plenty of opportunities and needs and requests and suggestions from the community with regard to promoting game-changing projects and expenditures.

Projects or expenditures that would have been memorable; memorable in a way that would have caused people to sit up and say, "See that? That was built for the community with casino revenue. That was thought out and cooperatively put together for the good of the greater community and it will stand for years to come!"

The Reporter has written previously of the wisdom of using the casino revenue to reduce the tax burden. Imagine if those lower taxes were then used to promote Niagara Falls as a community to live and do business in because "We're lowering taxes when the rest of the state is raising them!"

The single greatest recreation and green asset in the city is Hyde Park. Imagine how the casino revenue could have been used to update, improve and make Hyde Park the municipal jewel it could be, but isn't.

No studies necessary, the residents have



Downtown Niagara Falls was once a bustling small city, as shown in this postcard of Falls Street. The town's 1965 urban renewal plan changed all that.

a gut feeling for what is needed in the park: children's new playground equipment throughout; a basketball half court; street hockey pad; improved volleyball courts; repaired lawn bowling greens; improved bocce facilities; renovated baseball diamonds; a soccer field; rebuilt rose garden; attention to the forgotten monuments, markers and memorial trees; improved lake shoreline with dead trees removed and new plantings; care and attention to the many ill, dead and suffering trees in the park; and, a rededication and commitment to the day-to-day care of

the trees, vegetation and lawns.

But none of the above has been done.

What the administration did do was purchase a \$275,000 study out of Rochester that called for – you guessed it – additional studies as to how Hyde Park could be improved.

Casino revenue could have been directed toward an expansion of services and facilities for city seniors. A LaSalle area senior facility could have been built while the services at the Duke facility could have been enhanced.

The administration could have made a major commitment to the library system through the purchase of – lord forbid – books! Library learning programs could have been expanded and an allocation could have been made for library computers and contemporary learning tools. A culture and a community are defined as to how they value the written word and the act of learning.

Having said that what can be said about the Niagara Falls community?

Dutch Elm disease destroyed hundreds of vibrant, large trees across the city in the 1960's and the tree stock never fully recovered. Lost forever were the distinctive tall shade trees that lined city streets, adding value to property and beautifying the city. Casino revenue could have been used to maintain and improve the city's existing tree inventory while carrying out long-range plantings.

Similarly a massive citywide sidewalk improvement program could have been launched. Instead there is an on-going piecemeal effort that never solves the problem and consequently sidewalks are forever in disrepair.

But, hey, roads were paved, right?

Yes, roads were paved. But were they paved right? It's not even debatable that many of the roads that were paved just three years ago are literally coming apart at the seams. Was the work poorly performed or were the materials stretched or misused in order to create the impression of massive work being carried out? That doesn't even matter now, what does matter is that many of those roads are presently coming undone.

This administration has spent both city revenue and casino revenue to build "new parks" while letting routine park maintenance go. That's unacceptable and foolish but it fools no one.

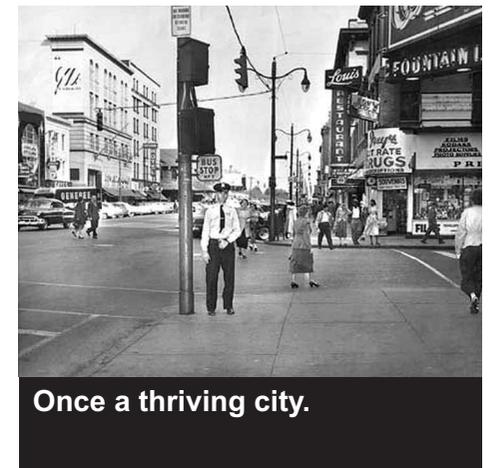
As of Saturday June 27, the grass in the



The Robert Moses Parkway cut off pedestrian access to the Niagara Gorge.



Mayor Dyster's casino cash plan.



Once a thriving city.

"restored" Jayne Park was over a foot tall. The administration crowed about the restoration work (work the residents never wanted) and yet refuses to cut the grass. The dirty little administration secret is that parks workers are being paid overtime to maintain a grass-cutting schedule that was never, until now, an overtime expense.

With all of the recent talk from the administration about the need to fund a summer camp school district program in order to "help the children" why wasn't casino revenue used to support a city recreation center? Does the administration genuinely want to help children or does the administration only want to toss children into the argument when it's politically expedient? I think we know the answer to that question.

Casino money - \$182.2 million to be exact – spent – all but \$14 million of that paid out during the administration of Mayor Paul Dyster (\$14 million to the Anello administration); casino money wasted, and not one meaningful or memorable project in the mix.

That's not just a shame, it's a downright shame, the kind historians write about sometime in the future, alongside the other great stupidities of our city – like Urban Renewal knocking down all the wonderful tourist shops and attractions for grandiose plans that were never built, or the Robert Moses Parkway blocking off our waterfront (it still does) like the great wall of China.

A real crying shame.

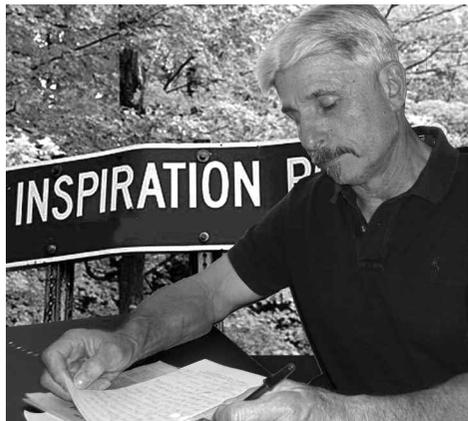


**Land of the free,
because of the brave.**

Happy 4th of July

**JOHN
Ceretto**
STATE ASSEMBLYMAN

Repercussions



James 'Jim' Szwedo

There is always a price.

Buy a car? There's a price. Go to a movie? There's a price. Buy a cup of coffee? There's a price. Simple.

Everyone understands this.

The problem is that the price isn't al-

ways obvious for everything.

People need to know that bad government also comes with a price.

We, the citizens and businesses of Niagara Falls, pay this price every day.

Compromised safety on our streets, shuttered businesses and homes, unemployment, subsidized housing, and lack of home ownership are all the price of a failed government.

Good government is proactive to the needs of its citizens and businesses; bad government can only react to problems created by its own inactivity in addressing those needs.

The Administration OF Mayor Paul A. Dyster has spent almost eight years addressing the needs of the few (friends and family) at the expense of the many citizens.

For too long, in my opinion, this administration has pandered to outside interests while sacrificing the quality of life of the

people that elected him.

This is an election year, and while he will pretend to care by showing a (sudden) interest in his citizens' problems, the question should be "Where have you been since we last elected you?"

The good news is, we can change this.

This is the time when your vote means more than their money.

Your right to good government is in your hands, not their pockets.

Ask questions. Talk to the candidates in person.

Don't be afraid to say, "I want to talk to the person running for office", not to party representatives carrying petitions.

Think of it this way: if they're too busy to listen to you now and come to your door, what chance do you actually have that they would choose to listen after you elected them to office?

But, at the end of the day, in order to

change the city's direction, we must listen to the community, not to politicians.

Community is made up of citizens and businesses.

The citizens and businesses form block clubs, business organizations, churches and civic organizations. These organizations represent the citizens in their neighborhoods. Within our community, each individual neighborhood has specific needs to be addressed in order to maintain its quality of life.

A seat at the table.

Safe streets and parks.

Accountability to all of the citizens.

A clear direction towards our future.

Our rights.

Ask questions.

Demand answers. Be included, and please vote.

That's the price you have to pay.

Mercy Flight May Come to Niagara Air Reserve Station

Tony Farina

State Sen. Robert Ort (R- North Tonawanda) announced on Monday that \$500,000 in state money has been secured to establish an emergency management hub at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station that could eventually include Mercy Flight WNY to utilize the base's hangers for emergency services.

Doug Baker of Mercy Flight said in a statement that "utilizing the pre-existing assets of the

Niagara Falls air base will help expand our emergency services presence in Orleans and Niagara County."

Baker credited Ort for helping to secure the funding that he said will help residents obtain more efficient access to life-saving services."

Ort said the money is being allocated as part of the state budget (Empire State Development) "to help base retention efforts for NFARS," and added that he believes the \$500,000 will help retain the base while expanding emergency services

across Western New York.

"As elected officials, we need coordinated efforts at the local, state, and federal level to ensure NFARS remains a vital center of military, commercial, and emergency services for our region," Ort said. "By focusing on this emergency management component, we're strengthening not only the base, but the community safety as well. These public-private partnerships—with collaboration at the local, county, state, and federal level—is key to the base's future."

The Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is Niagara County's largest employer and is an economic driver for the region bringing in nearly \$150 million annually, according to Ort's announcement. There are more than 3,000 full-time and part-time personnel with an estimated annual payroll of \$88 million. Sitting adjacent to an international border, it is within proximity of a population of 140 million people and has played an important role in military missions abroad as well as disaster response at home.

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Lorigo, County Lawmakers Address Financial Crisis at ECC

Tony Farina

We've been writing for the last several weeks about the financial problems and leadership issues at Erie Community College and it looks like somebody is finally taking notice.

Kevin Hardwick, the chairman of the Erie County Legislature's Enrichment Committee, was among the first to speak out about the need to address the college's long-term future in the midst of the current financial crisis caused in part by declining enrollment and inadequate county support.

And last week, three of Hardwick's Republican colleagues on the Erie County Legislature voted against the ECC budget that included a second straight \$300 tuition increase after first failing to win approval of an amendment that would have removed the tuition hike from the \$110.9 million budget submitted by the ECC brain trust headed by President Jack Quinn who himself is under fire in many corners for what some characterize as his "disengaged" leadership.

Hardwick said in an email to this reporter that if the amendment to remove the tuition hike had passed, ECC "would have had a \$3 million hole to fill and layoff notices would probably have gone out next week (this week)" as two months notice is required for most employees.

But Hardwick said the positive part was that "most legislators expressed support for increasing the county subsidy of ECC in next year's county budget. Today was scary, but I think the long term outlook is a bit brighter now." Many hope that Hardwick is right, but others inside the ECC bureaucracy believe removing the tuition hike from the budget plan might have forced the college brain trust to change the way they are doing business and find the money inside their budget, not on the backs of students. And it seems some lawmakers are coming around to that view.

Republican Joe Lorigo, the legislature's majority leader, sponsored the amendment to remove the tuition hike and was joined by fellow Republicans Ed Rath III and Ted Morton in voting against the budget after the amendment failed to win approval. The final budget vote was 8 to 3.

In a statement, Lorigo said "I am extremely disappointed that a majority of the legislature voted to raise costs for students yet again. We can't expect students to continue to carry the burden of ECC through annual tuition increases. Not only is ECC raising tuition by \$300 again next year, ECC representatives have said they plan to propose additional tuition hikes for the next several years. This is all while student enrollment is steadily dropping. The reality is it's time to have a discussion about priorities, and I believe investing in the education of our students should be high on that list."

Lorigo added that the state and county have been shortchanging the college for years "and it's time we did something about it. Community college should be as economical as possible, and this tuition increase is absurd." Very strong words from the majority leader and a sign that some lawmakers are getting the message that ECC is in trouble and elected officials need to step up.

Rath added in a statement that "just as we can't continue to raise taxes because of government's spending decisions, we can't raise tuition to fill a gap in ECC's budget," saying instead there is a need to focus on improvements and providing students a good education at a fair price.

Legislator Morton said he was disappointed to learn from ECC officials that future plans include tuition increases through 2021, saying the increases are a formula for disaster.

"I have met with several businesses in my district (Depew) that need a skilled workforce and are working with ECC to achieve this. It students can't afford to attend ECC, these busi-



Erie County Legislator Joseph Lorigo has his eye on the (ECC) ball....

nesses won't have the employees needed to succeed."

Democratic legislator Peter Savage said that while the amendment to remove the tuition hike from the budget was admirable, he was concerned about the resulting \$3 million budget hole in the ECC budget if that occurred and the money would be difficult to replace.

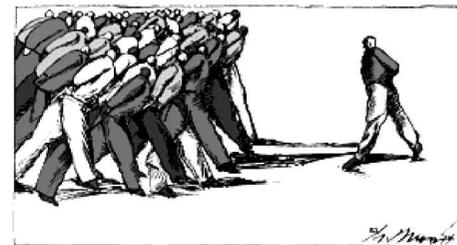
Other veteran observers believe taking away the tuition hike might have forced Quinn and his staff and the college board of trustees to find the money someplace else in their budget, and not force the students to carry the load. But for now, students will have to pay the freight and we'll have to wait for the county executive's budget plan due in the fall to see if he is going to find money to help the college, something more than the \$125,000 subsidy increase he

added this year. The county is funding the college at about 15.6 percent of the budget when the subsidy should be closer to 30 percent. Poloncarz rarely responds to questions, especially when it comes to sensitive issues like a failing public college on his watch.

Also, it is clear from informed sources that the college is still searching for about \$3 million to cover ECC's \$7.5 million share of the \$30 million STEM building project at the north campus. The winning contractor on the STEM project, as we reported several months ago, was selected by County Executive Mark Poloncarz's team even though the firm, Kideney Architects of Buffalo, was not the low bidder. As comptroller in 2011, Poloncarz had questioned Kideney's selection as improper but that changed earlier this year, the reasons which are not clear.

In addition to the \$3 million it still must raise to meet the \$7.5 million share for STEM, sources say ECC has not set aside any funds to furnish the new building.

If the county is sitting on a \$100 million in fund balance, as Majority Leader Lorigo says, it may be time for Poloncarz and lawmakers to take a second look at the valuable resource that is ECC and find the money to bail out the failing college before it is too late.



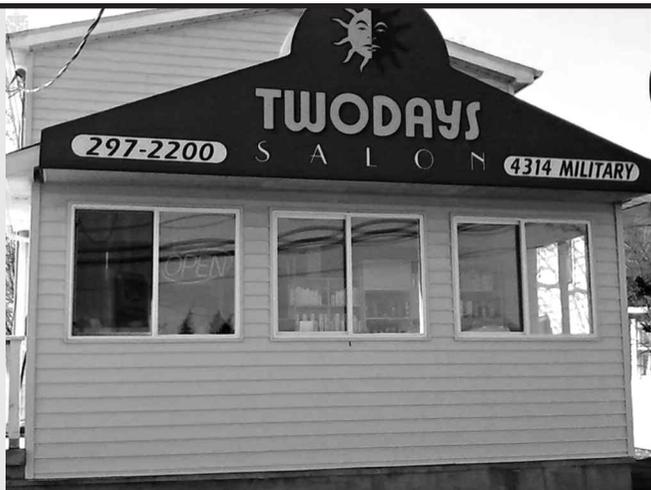
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Along with fireworks, parades and picnics, this week we celebrate the power of ideas and words.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

These particularly powerful words are taken directly from the United States Declaration of Independence; a document often referred to but rarely read in its entirety or studied in depth by Americans or our elected officials. In just this small portion of the overall document, so much applies to what is currently happening at the local, state and federal levels of our governments whether in Supreme Court decisions, state court cases, social issues or last minute scrambling in Albany. Think about these words this week as we celebrate Independence Day – a day commemorated on July 4th despite the Continental Congress vote in favor of independence on July 2, 1776. From 1776 until the present day, July 4th has been toasted as the birth of American independence, with typical festivities ranging from fireworks, parades and concerts to more casual family gatherings and barbecues. This year it would be great to also celebrate the entirety of the Declaration of Independence and the true nature and meaning of being independent and free. Have our elected officials secured or maintained our rights of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness as our Founding Fathers intended? Do our elected officials know what was meant by governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed? These are the questions we need to ask and have answered if we are to truly celebrate our independence as explained by our forefathers in this most powerful and profound document. While we remember how this federal holiday came to be, what it cost and what it really means, have a safe and joyful Independence Day!!



Crime thrives under Dyster

That's right crime thrives under our current mayor and the current council majority.

In the last year of our current Mayor's first term crime was rising at an alarming rate. Shootings, robberies, 7-11 getting robbed every night, people and tourist getting robbed while walking the streets, drive by shootings, houses getting shot up, home invasions, shots fired every night.

Our mayor's response was, "as long as you're not involved in drugs you have nothing to worry about".

Tell that to the people who live in these neighborhoods.

The people of our great city still chose to elect him to a second term.

Years later we are still facing the same problem, and now he wants a third term. This past weekend there were over five shootings and two armed robberies, but city hall said there is no crime problem here in the city.

What lead to the crime problem in the city?

Ask somebody at city hall and you will get a different answer every time. Let's take a look at our mayor's polices.

In 2010 he decided the police were guilty of misconduct.

Our Mayor wanted to become friends with our former attorney general Andrew Cuomo who is now the governor of the State.

Our mayor decided to enter into an order of consent agreement with the Attorney General and Warshaw and Associates were picked by Cuomo to monitor the police department for wrongdoing that was never found; the mayor sold the police out long before they could prove they were innocent. Warshaw and associates has a very close relationship with our current governor (something sounds fishy).

Since they been here it has put restrictions on what the police can and can't do. It seems right after this was passed is when all the gun violence started.

In the summer of 2011 there were over 60 reports of people shot or shots fired, and numerous robberies.

People were getting shot every day like today.

Did the consent order prevent the police from doing their jobs? Did it lead to the crime wave we have been dealing with the last few years?

Did the cops turn their head and let this happen, or if they did their jobs would they get in trouble by the attorney general. Did this prevent the police from doing proactive policing?

Obviously this order of consent is not working; it has made our city more dangerous than it ever was. Since Warshaw has been here Niagara Falls, the city, has made the list as the most dangerous city in the state and one of the most dangerous in the country, on numerous crime ranking online sites.

If we had real leadership in city hall, they would come up with a plan to combat the crime issues we face. But they don't.

If you ask the city council about these issues, they act like they are from another planet. The truth is they don't have a plan to make our city safe. The only way to make our city safe again is vote our current mayor out of office.

Fed up resident in Niagara Falls

Kayaks on the little Niagara river

I just took these pictures of the beautiful kayaks traveling back to the new kayak launch after paddling the Little Niagara river and the Cayuga creek across from Jayne Park.

What a great sight watching a group of 22 kayakers enjoying themselves on our beautiful waterways.

It is too bad that Mr. Mike Hudson felt it was necessary to disparage the efforts made by the city and the hard working volunteers (that means not paid Mr Hudson) from LaSalle Pride who pushed to get a disabilities accessible launch for everyone to use in Griffon Park. By the way, the ship "the Griffon" sailed on the Niagara River when the explorers LaSalle and Hennepin were discovering



this area.

I found Mr. Hudson's remarks about the dedication of the new kayak launch completely uncalled for and insulting to the members of the LaSalle Pride organization who have put in countless hours cleaning the Cayuga Creek of dead trees and trash that completely blocked the waterway for the many boaters, canoeists and kayakers who want to navigate the creek and the Little Niagara River.

Did you participate in any of that free (that means no one got paid) clean up, Mr. Hudson?

If you had, you would be just as insulted as many members of our organization are.

With sincere wishes that the boaters and kayakers in our area continue to enjoy our beautiful Niagara River.

The "explorers" LaSalle and Hennepin

Charley and the Man

I read your article about Charlie Walker not paying his taxes, yet he wants to raise the taxes for the people that do pay their taxes.

Sadly, this does not surprise me.

This city is a cesspool of do-nothing politicians who line their pockets with as much taxpayer money as they can, and give us, the taxpayer the middle finger.

Let me just mention a few issues that our poor excuses for mayor, and council people have opted to do nothing about but pretend to care and try to fool the public with meaningless words.

" We will find out why the houses on 72nd Street do not have water in the winter" (we all know what the problem is) and "We will try to take care of the craters or potholes in this city".

They could care less about the houses on 72nd Street, and the streets that get all the attention is the streets where the politicians live.

Dyster, the worst mayor in the history of this city, gets money from the casino and yet he says that we have a huge deficit.

Charley sans paying taxes, works for Memorial Hospital along with being on the city council, so the fact that he refuses to pay his taxes and yet he keeps on getting taxpayer money for his so-called council work is abuse of taxpayer money and he should be kicked off the council.

Delusional Dyster actually believes that he has been a great mayor so there is no chance that he will change since his belief in this delusion is very strong, but the decent people that live and pay taxes in this city know that Dyster is inept.

Remember the city engineer that he hired, Ali Marzban, who did not have a license to work in New York State, and he had to fire him. He then hired Tom Radomski to be the city engineer who also was fired shortly after that. Our mayor hired a Fire Chief by the name of Roger Melchior that was fired quickly after his hire.

Dyster should wear big floppy shoes and a big red nose.

No offense to clowns.

I feel that this city needs a control board that consists only of private sector taxpayers, that is, actively employed or retired private sector, since the public sector cannot be fair minded.

It is a fact that a public sector control board will favor and cater to the public sector so this does not, and could never work for city taxpayers.

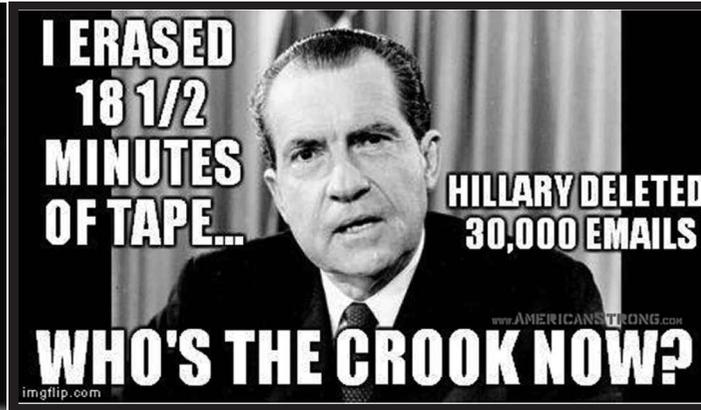
I thank your paper for keeping the city informed of the crap that goes on in this city. Totally disgusted with the poor excuses for Mayor and City Council

How Russia Got 1/5th of Your Uranium and the Clinton Foundation Received Mega Millions



J. Gary DiLaura

The Right Side



Wilson Andrews wrote a time line in the NY Times on April 22, 2015 that shows how the Clinton Foundation, William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton, and the Frank Guistra engineered the sale of 20% of the total supply of the USA's uranium to Russia and why Clinton started his Clinton Foundation (a true money laundering scheme, the best I have ever seen).

But who's Frank Guistra?

Guistra is a wealthy (4th wealthiest in Canada) mining and film businessman who makes Canada his home. How they met is not important but what Bill and Hillary Clinton and Guistra have done for each other' is interesting.

In September 2005, Guistra, accompanied by former President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton, attended a meeting in Kazakhstan and days later Guistra secures a uranium deal for his company, UrAsia. Clinton claims he just went along for the ride and didn't say a word.

Kind of like a wealthy man taking a beautiful hooker to a party and then telling his wife,

"We're just friends, honey and I didn't have sexual relations with that woman."

In 2006 Guistra donates \$31.5 million to the Clinton foundation.

Guistra, funnels this massive donation to the Clinton Foundation claiming that Canadian law prohibits the identification of the donors to the charity.

The donors turn out to be over 1000 governments and foreign "oligarchs" many

of whom are sworn enemies of the United States.

According to the Times, The Clinton Foundation legitimizes itself by spending about 10% for legitimate programs, with the balance going to the Clintons' salary, lavish travel and friends of the Clintons. All of course, tax free.

So that's \$10m for you and \$90m for me.

The Clinton Foundation has the best lawyers and accountants money can buy but somehow fails to report much of this and starts re-filing 5 years in tax returns.

Meanwhile, in Feb 2007, UrAsia (Guistra) merges with a South African company and assumes the name Uranium One and moves into the United States securing uranium assets.

In June 2008, the Russian atomic energy agency, Rosatom, begins negotiating for an interest in Uranium One (Guistra).

From 2008 to 2010 Uranium One and former UrAsia investors donate \$8.65 million to the Clinton Foundation.

These investors stand to make "a lot" of money if Rosatom (Russia) secures an interest in Uranium One.

In June 2009 a Rosatom subsidiary ARMZ (still Russia) secures 17% ownership in Uranium One and from 2010 to 2011 investors give millions more to the Clinton Foundation.

In June 2010, Rosatom (Russia) seeks the majority interest in Uranium One (Guistra) from the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States as apparently the

US government must approve any deals where an enemy of the US wants to buy our uranium that is used for big bombs. To ensure the deal is vetted, the State Department (Hillary) is a member of the Committee and gives her, I mean, their approval.

June 29, 2010: Bill Clinton is paid \$500,000 for a "speech" in Moscow, by a Russian investment bank that assigned a buy rating to Uranium One stock.

October 2010, Rosatom's majority ownership is approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment.

Jan 2013, Rosatom takes "full control" of Uranium One and takes it private. So Russia now owns 20% of the United States uranium assets and can do as they please with your uranium, even sell it to Iran, which they may do.

Hey, Congress, FBI, wake up, the Russians are coming the Russians are coming! If what the Times and other sources say is true, then there is a "strong basis" for a full blown, special investigation of the Clintons and all their scumbag associates!

Law enforcement calls this type of money transactions (to the Clinton Foundation from a Charity with unknown donors from all over the world), "money laundering".

What do you think would happen if you deposited a check for a million dollars in your bank account, and, when asked, "Where's it from?" ... you said "I don't have to tell"?

The Clintons formed a money laundering business for personal enrichment then

tell the world how much good the Foundation is doing. They help broker to enrich Russia with 1/5th of our uranium, the key ingredient for bombs, so they can sell same to Iran, which swears it will destroy us.

What does it take to commit Treason?

Now keep in mind that the newspaper that is considered the MOST liberal in the United States is the one that came up with the timeline.

How could anyone even think about electing Hillary to dog catcher let alone the presidency?

Why do you think she set up a personal email instead of a government MANDATED email and then, when caught, destroyed 30,000 emails?

Hey, FBI wake up. There is a strong basis for a full blown, special investigation of the Clintons and their scumbag associates and dealings!



Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for the last thousand years. It seems as if during that period the national life had this one end in view, viz how to make us weaker and weaker, till we have become real earthworms, crawling at the feet of every one who dares to put his foot on us. Therefore my friends, as one of your blood, as one that lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength.
Swami Vivekananda

Letter to the Editor

Mike Hudson's disdain for Grandinetti may very well be warranted, but to suggest Andrew Jackson is some great American hero is beyond the pale. Harriet Tubman did in fact help many slaves find their way to freedom While Hudson may choose to dispute the numbers, there is no doubting what her intent was. Maybe Hudson should consider why Tubman did not receive the accolades Jackson did. I understand the media was not always concerned with the doings people of color accomplished in that era. We have a chance to see what amounts to a home town hero be commemorated on the \$20 bill. The first woman, and African American woman to potentially be honored in such a manner. Hudson writes of what Harriet Tubman may or may not have done in his article, but mentions very little of Jackson's accomplishments.

Considering our proximity to Native peoples in our area I'd have thought Hudson may have looked a little deeper into how Jackson's policies affected them. He is directly responsi-

ble for ordering the military action that drove thousands of Native people to a reservation across the state of Mississippi. Thousands of men, woman, and children died. That black mark in our history became known as "The Trail Of Tears". Prior to that order he suggested to the newcomer white folks in Georgia that it was their right to take by force the land occupied the Cherokee people. American hero? Ask the Native people remaining in this country if they believe so. Apparently Hudson feels having Charlton Heston play Jackson in a movie should further cement his place in history.

I support the selection of Tubman for this honor. Grandinetti may or may not get credit for this to happen but Hudson's disdain for her has apparently gotten in the way of his chance to look further into the bloody history of Andrew Jackson.

Nice going hater!
Vincent P. Arnone
Wheatfield

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City Hall Jokes

One good hole deserves another. The mayor has announced that he isn't done digging test holes on 72nd Street. Looks like digging holes is a lot like eating potato chips...it's hard to stop at just one. That fee of \$5000 per hole could buy plenty of potato chips.

Got to keep them guessing. After moving the 5 pm council meeting to 6 pm and the 6 pm meeting to 7 pm the council has now moved the 6 pm meeting to 5 pm and the 7 pm meeting to 6 pm. If you're confused it's because they want you to be.



Paul Dyster and Kristen Grandinetti walk into a bar, are ushered to a private table, given complimentary drinks and then:

Dyster says to her, "Let's celebrate how I gave \$100,000 of taxpayer money to the school district for a 15 half-day summer program and scored big points with the school administration in an election year!"

Grandinetti says to Dyster, "Let's celebrate how, after six years, I suddenly abstained from a council vote affecting school district policy and simultaneously became a hero with the teachers union! and at the same time, because you still had three votes, the \$100,000 deal passed, so my abstaining meant nothing and you got what you wanted too. That's what I call a two-for."

Dyster said to the waitress, "Smart Girl -uh, er- 'woman' - that Kristen."



We hear Nick Melson is working feverishly to repair Dyster's severely damaged public image before Primary Day. One question: whose going to repair Melson's image?



Dyster is telling anyone who'll listen that he has to be returned to office so he can finish the job he started. That's like a bank robber asking for more time so he can completely clean out the vault.



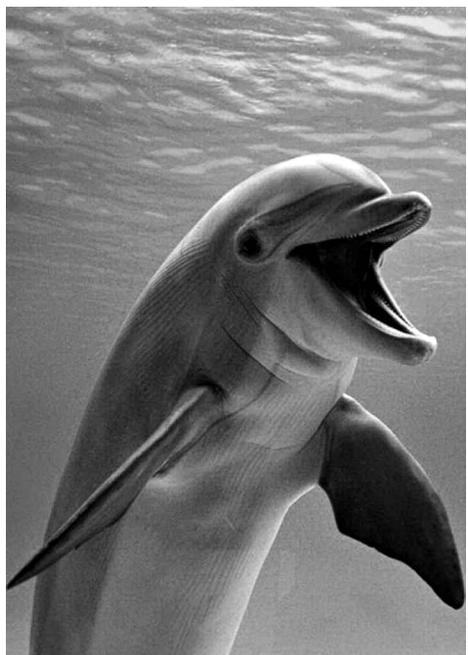
Both Dyster and Touma said they did it for the kids...handing \$100,000 of taxpayer cash to the school district so the students wouldn't "commit crime and arson." Uh-huh. That chunk of taxpayer money is the only thing keeping these youngsters from engaging in kidnapping for profit, becoming drug kingpins, enlisting in ISIS and subverting the United States Constitution.



At least he's consistent. Charles Walker can't pay his taxes, can't pay his credit union loan and sometimes he can't pay attention at the council meetings.



"The order of operations is a complex bunch of steps in rapid succession," said Mayor Dyster in a Gazette story last week. He wasn't describing emergency brain surgery he was describing the Hamister project.



Word has it that Dyster's campaign petition passers are so unpopular in LaSalle that even the Jehovah Witnesses are slamming the door in their face.



Critical thinking corner: the 2013 NYS Comptroller's audit of city finances reported that money had been purposely hidden within the budget in order to keep it away from the duly elected mayor and council, and that some of the hidden money remained unaccounted for. Why hasn't the Dyster administration addressed the matter?



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Uncle Guy A. Gator

As I sit here contemplating
whom the dark queen may be dating
and the door mouse masturbating
all is tragic metaphor
with the lawyers now abiding
guess with whom they may be siding
five of self import come riding
such excitement such a bore
quid pro quo directs the 'sail'
audit not the holy grail
shall ambivalence prevail
thus recant forever more
let it be and be it done
sophist fool within the sun
with his well concealed gun
now the jackal slams the door
watch the gambler sans regret
let it ride and place your bet
there be no guilt to beset
politics
(that filthy whore)

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Dyke--Ster, a Stunning Creation of the Master, Skrlin

The legend, Gerald Skrlin inevitably keeps pushing the boundaries of social mores and good taste, but in doing so he always makes the political/social point he set his sights upon. Here he has blended the cricket-promoting Mayor Paul A. Dyster with the gay agenda promoting Mayor Dyster as he is re--fashioned as Mayor Dyke Star.

Skrlin is able to employ the "dyke" word in this artistic endeavor because the urban dictionary allows such use.

The urban dictionary reads, "dyke: a word used to refer to Lesbians.

Originally meant to be a slur, it has been "re-claimed" by many Lesbians who might use it to identify themselves." So, the word now belongs to the masses and is fair game. And game it is in Skrlin's pen. While the mayor has become the darling of the cricket set and has presented himself as a freethinking and fair--thinking mayor who respects all sexual orientations and nationalities and races he has recently totally dimin-



ished that self --anointed reputation by hiring an administrative assistant who has tweeted all manner of obnoxious and ill conceived commentary

Newman
Art Critic

that runs counter to the diverse, democratic and fair thought that is allegedly promoted by Mayor Dyster.

As if that weren't enough his promotion of cricket has threatened the very future of local Little League baseball. Thusly, we see that the rock star/dyke star mayor has struck out by whacking youth baseball over the far right field wall, for what may be a home run in Dyster's eyes but remains a heart breaking swing of the cricket bat for young baseball players in the city.

Barbara Goosebury-Waterbury-Smythe-Anderson-Wilson

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