FBI Should Investigate Bronfmans and Cult Leader Keith Raniere
FBI Should Investigate Bronfmans and Cult Leader Keith Raniere: Part I

Clare and Sara Bronfman, heirs to the Seagram’s liquor fortune, and purported cult members, filed a complaint against me with the FBI claiming I defrauded them out of $1 million.

The federal government is actively investigating whether the Bronfmans are my victims. But they are the ones who should be investigated since there are many victims – including myself – of the Bronfman sisters and the man who leads them, Keith Raniere.

Raniere - who made the 1989 “The Guinness Book of World Records” for his high IQ – estimated to be between 188 and 194 - was born in Brooklyn in 1960, claimed to speak full sentences at age one, taught himself high-school math in 19 hours when he was 12 and completed three years of college math and computer-language classes by the age of 13.

He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in Troy, New York, in 1982, havin majoring in physics, math, and biology, and later worked as a computer programmer and consultant.

He says he considers himself to be an enlightened spiritual being on par with such as the Dalai Lama, achieving what he calls “Unification”.

Followers, mostly female, have described him as a “soft-spoken, humble genius” and some of these consider him to be like a Christ or Buddha born to save humanity.

Raniere has a penchant for attractive, affluent women and apparently teen and pre-teen girls.

In 1984, Raniere, 24, took 15-year-old Gina Melita’s “virginity in a dark room, her T-shirt left flecked with blood,” as reported in the Albany Times Union that she caught Raniere sneaking out of her sister’s bedroom and Raniere explained that Gina’s “soul was much older than her biological age” and she was actually a Buddha godess who came to earth to be with him.

After Raniere convinced her that she destroyed her spiritual path by not maintaining sexual fidelity to him, Gina committed suicide on park grounds adjoining the Karma Triyana Dharmachakra Buddhist monastery in Woodstock, NY when she shot herself in the head.

Aside from his spiritual and intellectual accomplishments, Raniere has a knack for business.

In the 1990s, Raniere launched Consumers’ Buyline, a members-only buying club headquartered near Albany that promised lucrative commissions to old customers for recruiting new ones. By the end of 1993 Raniere claimed he sold $1 billion in goods and services, employed 80 people and had a 250,000 members paying $15 a month for the right to sell his goods. He claimed he was worth $50 million.

One of his saleswomen had a 12-year-old daughter, named Rhianna. When Raniere offered free tutoring to the girl, her mother jumped at the chance since she thought Raniere was “an Einstein.”

“He was supposed to teach her Latin and algebra,” The Albany Times Union wrote, after interviewing Rhianna and her mother, 22 years later. “Instead, she said, he told her she hugged like a child, her arms wrapped around him but her hips pushed away. He taught her to hug the way adults do, pelvis-to-pelvis.”

Rhianna recalled that Raniere had sex with her in his townhouse, in empty offices, in an elevator, and a broom closet. After about 60 encounters, she ran away from home.

“He took my innocence,” she said. “I can never get that back.”

Raniere also lavished attention on married women as well.

Tony Farina, a top salesman for Consumers Buy Line, and living in Rochester, was married and raising an adopted son when Raniere invited her and her husband to his Albany area headquarters.

According to her interview in Metroland, Natalie said, “Before I knew it, he had me convinced that my husband was cheating on me and was having an affair with my nanny. It was all a lie . . . the next thing I knew, I was divorced and living in Albany”.

Natalie soon became Raniere’s girlfriend but she became disturbed when she discovered he had sex with many women he kept around him.

Raniere counselled her that a “threesome” would heal her issues. He also encouraged her to give up custody of her son while promising that she would bear his (Raniere’s) child and that this child would save the world.

This disturbed Natalie since doctors had told that she was unable to have children, she says, “So I tried to break it off with him.”

Unhappily for Raniere, at the same time, Consumer’s Buy Line declined, debt mushroomed, and customers complained. Regulators in more than a 15 states began to investigate.

In 1993, New York Attorney General Robert Abrams filed a civil suit alleging Consumers’ Buyline was similar to an illegal pyramid scheme.

By 1996, Raniere closed the company and signed an order agreeing to pay fines, and never participate in an illegal channel distribution

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scheme again. Raniere then changed his plans. He studied Scientology, Ericksonian hypnosis, and Neurolinguistic programming. He shed his business suits, and donned sweat pants, tee shirts and sandals, grew his hair and beard long, and formed a company which he later called NXIVM (pronounced like the patented drug NEXIUM) – a self-help coaching organization – putting a female follower, Nancy Salzman, a registered nurse and master hypnotist as president. Raniere’s nickname for Salzman was “Mesmer.”

While still living with Natalie and later in a townhouse north of Albany with several female followers, Raniere started modeling himself as a guru in line with Hindu religious leaders such as Swami Muktraranda. He gave up his driver’s license, said he had no bank account, not even a bed of his own and that he chose to forgo any salary from the coaching program he created. “I consider everything payment for what I’ve done,” he said.

He also began to disseminate books to his female followers such as “The Guru Discipline Relationship” and “Chasm of Fire” that encouraged people to follow their teacher unquestioningly and that enlightenment can only be achieved by renouncing worldly desires. Among the attachments Raniere inspired his followers resemble is monogamy, money, control of their daily schedules and their attachment to knowing things.

NXIVM claims that by using Raniere’s teaching techniques it “conducts professional success training programs for executives and other individuals concerned with developing their skills and achieving their goals.” A five-day course costs around $3,000; a 16-day course costs $25,500. Students pay up to $10,000 for 16 days of lectures and emotional probing in daily 17-hour sessions called “intensives.”

Students remove shoes for class, learn special handshakes and wear colored sashes in six different colors and with up to four stripes in each color to signify rank in the organization. The goal is to reach the black sash, which signifies a student is “unified” – which no student ever yet achieved.

Students bow to Raniere, who gave himself the title “Vanguard”. In order to move up to higher sash ranking, a student must recruit new students and contribute time as a volunteer.

NXIVM has been described as a multi-layered plan in which some members get commission for recruiting others, and the money layering plan in which some members get commissions on the other sash level incomes of NXIVM leaders. She was put on a mission for recruiting others, and the money

As Raniere developed his NXIVM philosophy, he developed techniques to recruit and retain students. Christine Marie met Raniere in 1998 when she was hired to write marketing materials. “He .... told me that I was such an innocent, pure soul that I didn’t even belong on this planet,” Marie told the Times Union.

Of her second visit, she recalled, “I remember him looking me in the eyes and touching me on the cheek and saying one day we’ll have a child together, and the child would be an avatar and the child would help change the world.”

After she had sex with him, Raniere “sat me down and told me I was now part of his inner circle and committed for life and I could never be physically involved with another man.”

When she asked if he was involved with other women, he said she was. She observed that many women shared his townhouse. Marie decided to leave the group and did not have his avatar baby.

Natlie also told Raniere used NXIVM courses to instruct women in sexual practice. Raniere invited her to attend his childhood sexuality class. He told students, including Natalie, that mothers in some tribes perform oral sex on their children to soothe them.

Natalie thought the class was created just for her. As Raniere developed his humanitarian theories, he developed a strategy to avoid paying taxes. He urged followers not to file tax returns. Some NXIVM instructors and employees, like Raniere, do not report income to the government, according to multiple sources and court filings.

NXIVM has been dissolved as a corporate entity by the New York State Department of State for not paying taxes.

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER NOV 19 – NOV 25, 2015

Tax evasion, pyramid schemes, statutory rape, part of Raniere’s recipe

In 2000, Barbara Bouchey, a financial manager from Saratoga County, started taking NXIVM courses, having been recruited by Salzman. Raniere soon made efforts to seduce Bouchey since she could bring in her wealthy and influential clientele. Raniere told Bouchey she must have a sexual relationship with him because she was “chosen” to bear his child, she said in a deposition. This seemed odd to her since Bouchey had been previously told she was unable to bear children.

Raniere also told Bouchey she was, in a previous life, the Nazi, Reinhard Heydrich, one of the main architects of the Holocaust. And Raniere told Bouchey he had come up with a mathematical formula that would enable him to make a fortune in commodities. Bouchey said in court statements that she gave Raniere $1.6 million so he could test his formula.

When this commodities’ investment scheme started losing money, Raniere blamed the failure on Bouchey’s emotional reaction to losing money which was influencing the universal forces and affecting him negatively on a spiritual level, Bouchey recalled in a 2009 deposition.

Bouchey soon lost her life savings. Happily for Raniere, Seagram’s heiress Sara Bronfman, 25, joined NXIVM in the fall of 2002. Her sister, Clare, 23, followed soon afterward. Sara marveled at how much Raniere was able to teach her. And she soon became romantically involved with NXIVM trainer Edgar Boone who ran a Mexican NXIVM training center.

After they broke up, sources say, Sara began a furtive relationship with Raniere, who would be dropped off at hotels to rendezvous with the heiress. As Sara would later explain on her blog, she was “in search of finding ways to bring peace to the world” and Sara rose quickly in the ranks of NXIVM leaders. She was put on Nxivm’s board and given the title of “Minister of Humanities”.

TO BE CONTINUED...
Shmuel Shmueli, Serial Conman and Fraudster
Part II, His Hearth and Home and early fraudulent practices

Frank Parlato

Part II of a series where I am the journalist covering a federal investigation in which I also am the investigation’s target. A companion series about the Bronfman sisters and cult leader Keith Raniere are also in this issue. Both are connected to the federal investigation. The series on Shmuel Shmueli details how he defrauded more than two dozen lawyers in Buffalo and elsewhere.

The man who ripped off eminent lawyers such as Joseph Zalsky, Steven Cohen, Corey Hogan, John LaFalce, Eric Bloom, William Savino, Mitchell Banas, Joseph Mazurke, Phil Abromowitz, David Kloss, Michael Paskowitz, as well as the law firms of Jackele, Fleischmann & Muegel, Damon Morey, and others must not be considered lightly.

Where did he come from?

Born in Israel, Shmuel Shmueli is 64. He claims to be a devout and practicing Orthodox Jew who observes the Sabbath and will not eat anything other than Kosher food.

For Shmueli charity doesn’t begin at home, charity is a home.

On Dec. 10, 1979, Shmueli bought a lovely, 2,700 square foot family home at 933 E. 17th St in Brooklyn and moved in with his wife and small children.

Over the years, his wife gave birth to more children and they were raised in the Shmueli Brooklyn home.

Being creative, Shmueli placed three mortgages on the property: Dime Savings Bank, Bank Leumi Trust, an Israeli bank, and a fourth mortgage from the seller, Andrew James.

Two years later, on June 24, 1981, he transferred the home to his wife, Zvia, who later got a $110,000 mortgage from Citi Bank.

On Feb. 10, 1989, she transferred title back to Shmueli, who, in turn, got a mortgage from Sol Orbuch for $77,000.

On Feb. 13, 1992, Shmueli transferred the home back to his wife.

One month later, Zvia transferred the home to their 27-year-old daughter, Batya Shmueli.

On Feb. 29, 1996, Batya got a $328,000 mortgage from the Chicago Mortgage Bankers Corp. of State Island.

Then in April, 1999, Batya signed a contract to sell the family home to Jacob and Eva Fuhrman for $480,000.

The Fuhrman’s closed on Aug. 26, 1999, expecting to move in and enjoy the same happy hearth and home the Shmueli’s enjoyed for 20 years.

After closing, however, Shmueli declined to let the Fuhrman’s move in, and produced a lease, signed by his daughter, Batya, that leased the home to Shmueli.

He declared he would stay and pay rent.

The Fuhrmans filed suit in the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York to eject Shmueli from the house.

Shmueli, representing himself, filed a counterclaim, a motion to dismiss, and asked to postpone the hearing since, he said, he had business in Israel.

He also asked the judge to restrict the new owners from entering the house “for any reason at any time” while he was in Israel and asked that all mail from the court be sent to his address: P.O. Box 607, Bnai Brak, Israel.

Magistrate-Judge Joan M. Azrack disagreed and issued a Report & Recommendation to Judge Carol B. Amon that Shmueli be ordered to vacate the premises, and, if he did not, “The U.S. Marshals shall be authorized to execute the order to vacate, using whatever force is reasonably necessary”.

Shmueli objected but, curiously, his daughter, Batya wrote to Judge Amon that she had no objection to the court evicting her father.

At some point, during a hearing or conference, Shmueli admitted he did not tell Fuhrmans of the lease until after closing and on Nov. 23, 1999, Judge Amon granted summary judgment to the Furhmans ordering Shmueli to vacate by Dec. 13, 1999.

Yet Shmueli did not move out. The Court directed the U.S. Marshall to eject him. And on June 22, 2000, the Judge ordered that the Clerk of Court enter “judgment against defendant Shmueli Shmueli in favor of plaintiffs in the amount of $56,668.81, comprising $41,668.81 in actual and consequential damages and costs and $15,000 in punitive damages.”

Shmueli however was never to pay the judgment since he discharged the debt, along with $24.5 million in other debts, in bankruptcy on Aug. 23, 2002.

For Shmueli’s bankruptcy petition, when asked if any “books of account or records” were missing, Shmueli declared, “records were lost during eviction action without my presence, court ordered.”

One of the last entries of record in the Fuhrman matter is dated June 2, 2000. It concerns mail addressed “to Shmuel Shmueli, P.O. Box 607, Bnai Brak, Israel. Returned with insufficent Address.”

If Shmuel’s handling of matters concerning his home was a little erratic, the man who defrauded top attorneys gets high marks for deeper meaning of the Jewish religion was not so much financially.

The Wisconsin Institute of Torah Study, Milwaukee, WI, made a claim of $3,128 against him.

Verizon, Mid Atlantic Graphics, and Sprint rounded out the list of creditors.

And as if that wasn’t bad luck enough – Shmueli’s newspaper came to a screeching halt.

In April, 1988, Shmueli’s newspaper came to a screeching halt.

In June, Shmueli retained Moskowitz & Book of NY to represent him. Within a month, the firm applied for and were granted leave to withdraw as his attorneys.

Shmueli served a verified answer through Andrew Paul Cooper Esq. By January 1999, Cooper was granted leave to withdraw. (“Cooper claimed $12,000 in unpaid legal fees.”)

In April, Magistrate Judge Francis denied Shmueli’s application to file a counterclaim in one action, plaintiffs may not bring duplicative action under Chapter 7 of the Bankruptcy Code.

Dr. Yossi Gamzu, editor, claimed he worked for 412 months and was owed $11,250 in wages and presented a letter from the newspaper stating he was employed at an annual salary of $36,000 per year.

Shmueli contested Dr. Gamzu arguing he was unpaid since his immigration status as an Israeli citizen would not allow Shmueli to pay him and that Shmueli’s letter reconnection Gamzu’s employment was written to deceive US Immigration authorities who would be more likely to issue Gamzu a “Green Card,” if they believed he had gainful employment.

The other employees he argued were barred or that he owed the money personally and a debtor corporation is not liable for an officer’s personal debts.

Beaz Gabbai claimed he accepted employment as a graphic designer for less than $5 an hour, rather than his customary $25 an hour, with a verbal agreement that Shmueli would sponsor his “Green Card” application.

When the time came, Gabbai claimed, Shmueli refused to sponsor his Green Card application unless Gabbai paid him $25,000.

In any event, on Jan. 19, 1988, Chief Judge Conrad B. Duberstein noted, “if there is a bona fide dispute as to either the law or the facts, then the creditor does not qualify and the petition must be dismissed.”

The petition was dismissed. But hard luck followed.

Other employees won claims such as a $100,000 judgment against Shmueli in favor of former editor Uri Lehavi and another editor, Noam Niv made a $20,000 claim.

As one of his writers, Yori Yanover, said, “Shmueli ... bounced checks like he was one of the five owners of the Harlem Globe Trotters.”

It was not just employees that Shmueli did not pay, but companies and individuals in America and Israel.

Printers, landlords, friends in Israel, Banks all got judgments.

Shmueli’s course of study of the deeper meaning of the Jewish religion was fruitful spiritually, it was not so much financially.

The Wisconsin Institute of Torah Study, Milwaukee, WI, made a claim of $3,128 against him.

Shmuel Shmueli
Anyone who is a parent knows the anguish of a child suffering from a high fever, a relatively common childhood illness such as chicken pox or the mumps, or a broken bone caused by some playground mishap.

For Danielle Faling, whose two year old daughter Leigha suffers from a myriad of congestive heart problems, such problems would be a welcome relief.

Doctors first noticed Leigha’s condition when Danielle was six weeks pregnant with her. Since she was born she has had two open heart surgeries, multiple hospital visits and seven full blood transfusions. Her first surgery was when she was just 1 week old and her second before her first birthday.

Even throughout all of this Leigha has been a true hero to everyone waking up every day with a smile on her face and bringing joy to everyone she meets with her amazing attitude and courage.

Leigha has a long battle ahead of her. Doctors say that if she doesn’t get a heart transplant, she probably won’t live past the age of 10.

But if she’s anything like her mother, a positive attitude and proactive stance has often gone a long way in proving the health care professionals wrong.

“She’s our little miracle,” Danielle said. “Every day we get to spend with her is a miracle.”

After suffering heart failure in September, the beautiful little girl spent 44 days in the hospital, finally coming home on November 1.

As many American’s discover to their dismay in times of crisis, it is the insurance company rather than the family physician who makes the final judgement about what care is administered.

On Wednesday, the long awaited approval came through.

“I’m calling to make the appointment now,” Danielle said Wednesday. “We’ve been waiting on pins and needles for this.”

Now the challenge will be for the doctors to find little Leigha a compatible heart, she added.

Until then, Leigha will remain bound to oxygen tanks and continue to receive nourishment by way of feeding tubes.

“She’s our little warrior,” Danielle says. “And we’re just taking it day by day.”

Regular trips to hospitals in Rochester and Pittsburg have left the family financially strapped. Danielle, who works as a cook in Buffalo, often has to decide whether to visit her daughter or stay home and earn money. She posts regularly on a Facebook page she created called Leigha Updates, and a Basket Auction and Pasta Dinner fundraiser is planned for this Sunday, November 22, from 12-6 p.m., at the Volare Lodge, 5615 Kies Avenue, to help defray expenses.

“I just want to thank everyone for their support, prayers, and donations through this hard time. Every little bit helps,” Danielle said. “It truly means so much to us to see the amount of support and love that we have. As Leigha’s medical journey continues its a little easier knowing we have so many people on our team. Thank you all again and much much love.”

If Niagara Falls is known for anything, it is having a big heart. Hopefully, people there will share some of that this Sunday with a beautiful little girl who’s having some trouble with hers.
What the ‘Chit’ Will the Restructuring Board to do?

Anna Howard

What is the state restructuring board going to do when they arrive at city hall to look at Paul Dyster’s finance records? Only time will tell but if they discover what the NYS Comptroller discovered - mishandled money, unaccounted for money, casino revenue improperly applied to the recurring deficit - the chit, offered through participating in the state restructuring program, could hit the fan.

We have no idea how the board will proceed but we have no doubt that the mayor and those city employees who benefit from governmental non transparency will surrender only the barest of financial facts to the Albany bean counters.

With that in mind we’re using this column space to list some of the fiscal facts that the restructuring board should be aware of before they sit with the mayor and his department heads. It’s a safe bet that Dyster won’t be sharing any of the information you read here with the restructuring board.

The anonymous fund. Paul Dyster came into office on the back of an unethical, and logically illegal, slash fund. That fund caused the mayor to increase the salaries of department heads and permanently skew the pay scale across city government. Many city hall salaries top the salaries of matching positions in much larger cities, such as Buffalo. And, incredibly, the mayor continues to blame employee pay for the city’s finance woes.

The “municipal building” also called the courthouse. It was supposed to cost $30 million but came in $20 million higher at an astounding $50 million. Where’d the $20,000,000 go?

The Dyster-DeSantis train station opens next year. It’ll cost no less than $44 million with no less than $4 million of that coming from casino revenue. It was “re-bid” for no good reason at an added cost of $350,000 in additional casino revenue. And, don’t forget that the city has no funds earmarked, let alone potentially available, for day to day operation once it opens.

Mr. Dyster has spent more than $1,000,000 for outside lawyers. This after he increased his corporation controller’s salary by over 30% - upon hiring in 2008 - and added a fourth attorney to the city legal staff. Internal and external city legal costs are all out of proportion for a city the size of Niagara Falls.

The parking plan/study that the mayor and council chairman incessantly talk about has cost well over $100,000 and is expected to increase in expense before a single parking meter is planted downtown. Dyster has - this year and for next year - placed projected “parking revenue” into his budget. That’s obvious book cooking in that projected numbers were placed in the final budget while not a single parking meter was in place to realize that projected number.

The restructuring board should tour the city and one stop of the tour should be 72nd Street. They should understand that the waterfront remediation job is scheduled to cost not a penny less than $970,000 while the job could have been done for $340,000 had it been done in 2010 when the road was rebuilt. We predict the job will total out - change orders, city employee overtime, engineer consulting fees, new stipends for chosen employees - at not a penny under $1.3 million.

Mayor Dyster has played a cynical game of “now you see me now you don’t” with regard to the misspending of the casino revenue. While he has called himself the gatekeeper of casino revenue he repeatedly blames the city council for the lack of available casino revenue. He claims there’s a casino revenue spending plan but no one has ever seen it. The restructuring board should surgically review expenditure by expenditure for the past eight years - all of the mayor’s casino revenue expenditures.

The renovation of the city ice dome was targeted to come in at $4 million. It’s climbed to over $12 million and no one seems know how that happened.

Overtime for elements of the city workforce has expanded throughout the past eight years. Stipends, something that used to be as rare as hens teeth, are handed out by the administration in a questionable fashion. Some employees have literally doubled their salaries with overtime and stipends.

Mr. Dyster continues to employ the disturbing gambit that the Reporter has named: retire and rehire. The bureaucratic trick sees Dyster’s favorite employees retire only to be rehired days later at $30,000 per year as part time “consultants.”

The 20013 audit by the state Comptroller detailed a series of disturbing financial measures that the Dyster administration has taken. Including the misuse of casino revenue, money improperly hidden from the mayor and counsel, money that could not be accounted for, to improperly hide the mayor and counsel’s financial dealings.

This list could go on and on but we’re confident that we’ve mentioned some key areas that the restructuring board can zero in on for a start.

Sathia Nathan, M.D.

Michele N. Sneed, RN, MS-RNP

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Cash for Penguins no Problem for Dyster; 72nd Street Water Main $$$ Cause Worry

Mike Hudson

With the question of how the city of Niagara Falls will pay for the $940,000 water main project on 72nd Street unresolved, how will a cash strapped city looking at a budget deficit of more than $7 million afford it?

In the run up to the election, Mayor Paul Dyster promised that the water mains would be fixed before the snow flies. In 2014 and again earlier this year, more than 200 households were without running water after the mains froze.

Reconstruction of the roadway between Niagara Falls Boulevard and Stephenson Avenue is underway in an attempt guarantee to have water flows smoothly to homes on 72nd Street. Some spent weeks without water.

Dyster said the project would be paid for by a state grant, combined with funding from the city and the Water Board. The grant money has not been forthcoming and the Water Board has thus far refused to participate financially in the project.

“They’re still ongoing discussions between our corporation counsel and their legal counsel,” Dyster said Friday. “At this point, we’ve not been successful in getting them to agree to cost sharing.”

The Water Board held the “you break it, you bought it” position, noting that water service on 72nd Street was never overall public health.

The mayor refused to rule out a lawsuit in the case.

There have been some suggestions on the part of the council chairman about other ways the city could go about making itself whole with the water board,” Dyster said. “That’s not something, at this point, we’ve made any decisions on.”

In any event, Dyster’s crying poor about the water main project seems strange in light of the numerous fanciful ways he’s found to spend taxpayer’s money over the past couple of years.

Like the $150,000 he spent for new penguin habitat at Aquarium of Niagara in April. Or the $707,000 he squandered on the Hard Rock Café concert series. Dyster gave $1.5 million to USA Niagara Development, a state agency, in September.

And the mayor’s unholy alliance with religious cults manifested itself when he gifted a relief organization called Isaiah 61 a whopping $500,000 of your money to convert an abandoned fire hall on Highland Avenue into a new clubhouse - without bothering to tell the Council that the executive director had just skipped town and their programs have ground to a halt.

Dyster gave Community Missions $150,000 to pay off a tax lien, the epic failure known as the Holiday Market got $225,000, the annual Blues Fest here took in $46,000, the ironically named Niagara Arts and Cultural Center raked in $210,000 and “City Planner” Tom DeSantis was given $6,500 to buy new carpeting for his City Hall office.

And in August he committed to shell ing out $845,000 of your money to buy and “develop” a languishing brownfield property on Highland Avenue.

Half a million here, half a million there and pretty soon you’re talking real money. Millions spent without Dyster once uttering a concern about where the money might come from. Or what the public benefit of all the spending might be.

But now, with 72nd Street residents possibly looking at a third winter in a row without running water, there’s a problem.

Lorigo Deserves Credit for Urging Push Back on Syrian Refugees

Tony Farina

Far from being ignorant of the resetting process, as alleged by Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, county lawmaker Joseph Lorigo (C-West Seneca) should be applauded for urging Poloncarz to reverse his stance on accepting Syrian refugees into the county.

Lorigo didn’t back down from his original tweet last Saturday night on the subject of not accepting Syrian refugees despite the strong backlash from Poloncarz. “In a news release on Sunday, Lorigo said “I believe the risk to our community is far too great,” saying “we must do everything can to protect the citizens of Erie County and Western New York.”

His words are clearly aimed at local leaders, like Poloncarz and by extension Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster who is also on record in favor of accepting the Syrian refugees and not pushing back against state and federal officials who are backing the resettlement process.

Maybe Poloncarz, Dyster, and others should pay more heed to what happened in Paris last Friday night as French authorities now believe that a 27-year-old Belgian man (now dead) who fought in Syria for the Islamic State was one of the masterminds behind the terrorist attack that killed 130 and injured about 350 others.

They should also listen to the words of French President Francois Hollande who said, as reported in the New York Times on Monday, the attacks had been “planned in Syria, organized in Belgium, perpetrated on our own soil with French complicity,” and he described Syria as “the biggest factory of terrorists the world has ever known.”

Now the refugee problem is a human crisis, to be sure, but welcoming Syrian refugees into Western New York is extremely risky, as Lorigo is warning, given the ability of some of those refugees to come with the purpose of killing innocent people as part of their religious crusade. It only takes one or two terrorists to inflict enormous human casualties, as we have seen time and time again, and Lorigo is right to urge local officials to push back against the resettlement policy in the interests of protecting American citizens who could be placed in life-threatening danger if one or more of the refugees that come here are jihadists bent on killing Americans.

Now there is little evidence that any of the Syrian refugees who have been resettled in the United States have become a threat, but it only takes one, and many leaders across the country are urging the government to suspend or stop the resettlement program for now and legislation to that end is being readied by the new House Speaker, Republican Paul Ryan. Some Democrats are also looking at a pause in the resettlement program in the wake of the horrible tragedy in Paris.
Niagara Co. Lawmakers Back Collins, Lorigo: Cuomo Should Block Syrian Refugees From New York State

LOCKPORT—Niagara County lawmakers added their name to a growing chorus of government leaders calling on New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to block Syrian refugees from New York Tuesday, just four days after an Islamic terrorist bombing in Paris left 129 people dead.

Niagara County’s opposition comes as the Obama administration seeks to resettle 10,000 refugees from the Syrian civil war in cities across the U.S. and an announcement by top officials in neighboring Erie County that at least 300 refugees are set to be placed there.

The governors of at least 30 states have, since the weekend, announced they would work to block refugee resettlement in their states, due primarily to concerns that terrorists associated with the Islamic State movement or other terrorist groups had made good on threats to infiltrate the Syrian refugee population. At least one of the terrorists involved in last Friday’s Paris attacks was carrying a Syrian passport and identified as a refugee that had entered continental Europe via Greece in October.

The unanimous vote by county lawmakers to demand Cuomo to work to block federal resettlement of refugees in New York puts Niagara County squarely in line with positions advanced by U.S. Rep. Chris Collins, R-Clarence, and Erie County Legislature Majority Leader Joseph Lorigo, R-West Seneca, since the Paris attacks.

“Ensuring the safety and security of our country and Western New Yorkers is my central focus,” Collins stated Monday. “At this point, we cannot guarantee with 100 percent certainty that the refugees we are accepting from Syria don’t pose a threat to our community. Until we have a process in place that achieves that goal, I am calling on Gov. Cuomo to stop plans to accept Syrian refugees.”

Niagara County Legislator John Syracuse, R-Newfane, echoed that sentiment Tuesday.

“We don’t know who these people are. Even the director of the FBI has stated in Congressional testimony that we have no workable database, no background information, on these refugees,” Syracuse said.

“While many who want to help these refugees may have the very best of intentions, we can’t let public safety become a secondary consideration to political correctness.”

Syracuse was referencing Oct. 21 Congressional testimony by FBI Director James Comey, who stated flatly that the U.S. does not have the ability to conduct thorough background checks on the 10,000 refugees being admitted by the Obama administration.

“If someone has never made a ripple in the pond in Syria in a way that would get their identity or their interest reflected in our database, we can query our database until the cows come home, but there will be nothing show up because we have no record of them,” Comey told federal lawmakers.

County lawmakers noted that the Lackawanna Six terror cell had been composed of naturalized U.S. citizens that had operated in Western New York without detection—and some worried that unknown migrants without any ties to the local community present an even bigger potential security threat.

“The lack of verifiable information about these individuals’ backgrounds—about who they are, about who their associates are, about past radical or criminal activity—these are all reasons to suspend any resettlement at least for the foreseeable future,” Legislator Michael A. Hill, R-Middleport, said.

Niagara County’s call-out to Cuomo to block the resettlements, which, in addition to its unanimous passage, carried sponsorship from the Legislature’s entire Majority Caucus, also expressed concerns about the potential for additional strain on state-managed, but county-funded, social welfare programs and Medicaid. Majority Leader Rick Updegrove, R-Lockport, noted that the lack of a residency requirement for Medicaid all but guaranteed New York’s rich Medicaid benefits would make the state a magnet for the resettled foreign nationals.

“There are too many unknowns with this program, too many hidden dangers, too many hidden costs,” Syracuse told colleagues, “We need to do what’s right to protect our community.”
W

While Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster is begging President Barack Obama to send Syrian refugees to the city in a desperate attempt to boost tourism here, authorities in France say that open immigration at least in part led to the horrific attacks that left 129 dead in Paris on Friday night.

At least one of the assailants in Friday’s deadly attacks recently entered France as a Syrian refugee, according to the Wall Street Journal, exposing gaps in the continent’s security as it copes with the biggest refugee crisis since World War II.

European security officials have warned that Islamic State operatives would bring terror by mixing with the cohort of Iraqi and Syrian migrants who are fleeing war each week.

“It is clear now that together with the victims of Islamo-fascism in the Middle East that come as refugees, extreme elements are crossing to Europe,” Greek defense minister Panos Kammenos said.

The attacks could shift its attitude on immigration and Europe’s ongoing refugee crisis according to the U.S.-based think-tank Stratfor.

The attacks can be expected to bolster the popularity of right-wing politicians and “those groups that have been calling for a halt in the flow of immigrants,” Stratfor said in a note issued Friday night.

“It would be ‘foolish to believe that there are no jihadists among the refugees that cross into Europe,” said Greek Immigration Minister Yiannis Mouzalas.

The Greek Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection has confirmed that the suicide bomber found with a Syrian passport on his person was registered as refugee on Leros Island in October.

Greece’s deputy minister in charge of police, Nikos Toskas, said he was identified as a refugee according to EU rules as he passed through the country on route to Paris. In all, 129 people were killed in a series of coordinated bomb and gun attacks on Friday night. With 99 of the 352 wounded critically injured, the toll death is expected to rise.

Locally, Erie County Legislator Joseph C. Lorigo is calling on County Executive Mark Poloncarz to reverse his stance on accepting Syrian refugees into Erie County in light of the terrorist attacks in France.

Lorigo made the call Saturday on Twitter and Facebook, and later told The Buffalo News he’s concerned because one of the gunmen was disguised as a Syrian refugee with a Syrian passport.

“I had a conversation with an immigration specialist with Homeland Security, who told me ISIS claims to have 4,000 terrorists disguised as refugees stationed already in Western countries,” he said.

“The risk to our community is far too great,” the West Seneca Conservative tweeted. “We must do everything we can to protect the citizens of Erie County.”

Poloncarz was not immediately available for comment.

Poloncarz in September said Erie County could take in “at least 200 and potentially up to 300” Syrian refugees over the next year in light of the civil war engulfing that country and the migration crisis spreading across Europe.

“What’s happening in Syria is horrific,” Poloncarz said then. “We as a community of good neighbors – and having the experience of handling immigrants and refugee populations, especially during recent years – will be opening our arms again to help Syrians in need.”

Also, Niagara Falls was hit Friday night and again Saturday in the French colors in remembrance of the victims of the Paris attacks.

It was to be bathed in blue, white and red lights for the first 15 minutes of every hour, from 5 p.m. until midnight Saturday and Sunday, the Niagara Falls Ornamentation Board said.

Dyster was quick to claim credit for requesting the lighted tribute on his Facebook page.

“Thanks to Illumination Board colleagues for rapid decision last night to light the Falls blue, white and red in solidarity with our friends and allies in France,” he wrote.

Sam Hoyt, head of the state’s Empire State Development Corporation’s efforts on the Niagara Frontier, made sure the point was not lost.

“For thanks for making the request, Paul Dyster,” he wrote moments later.

The Peace Bridge is also lit up in the colors of the French flag, which are fortunately the same as the American and British flags.

But our symbol minded mayor had nothing to say about his sad effort to bolster the city’s sagging population numbers with Syrian refugees.

Indeed, he has enrolled Niagara Falls in an organization called Cities United for Immigration Action, which has written a letter to President Obama asking that Syrians be sent this way.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Robert T. Moses State Parkway in Buffalo was publicly identified by security officials as a potential target for terrorists, and the Robert Moses Parkway was shut down for a period of time to deny casual access to the facility.

An attack there could potentially turn out the lights for much of the Northeastern part of the country.

Obviously, not all of the Syrian refugees are terrorists, but few speak English, and the additional burden of significant numbers of them would place on the county’s already overstressed social service agencies is undeniable.

Dyster is desperate to get the city’s population back up to 50,000 and has endorsed a variety of schemes to try and make that number.

The federal department of Housing and Urban Development uses 50,000 as the cutoff point in determining how much municipalities receive in Community Development Block Grant monies, and if Niagara Falls comes in at less than that in the 2020 census the city will lose millions.

Previously, Dyster has welcomed parcels registered sex offenders here with open arms, and even instituted a program that actually paid people to come and live in the city.

The Syrian refugee gambit is just the latest twist in what has been a sad and largely failed effort at immigration.

It has been suggested that, if Dyster wants to bring Syrian refugees here, he ought to let them stay at his house on Orchard Parkway. His boys are grown and it is a big house.

His primary cheerleader on the city council, Kristin Grandinetti, lives alone in a big house right across the street. Perhaps she could take a few as well.

Mike Hudson

States, Countries Slam Door on Syrian Refugees After Paris – Dyster Not Worried

Mike Hudson

“Paris changes everything.” That phrase, uttered many times this week by governors across the country and the leaders of many European nations, reflects the growing concern of many that the open door immigration policy offered to Syrian refugees was a mistake.

Governors across the country are scrambling to close off their states to resettled Syrian refugees in the wake of the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris that are linked to Islamic State extremists.

Governors of Illinois, Ohio, Florida, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Arizona, Indiana, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Michigan, Texas and Arkansas — a majority of them Republican — have said that they are seeking to stop the relocation of new Syrian refugees to their states out of fear that violent extremists posing as refugees might gain entry to the country.

And in a European string of countries have imposed border controls to prevent the mass movement of people across the continent, including Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Austria, France and Belgium. Polish officials announced the country would withdraw from a European Union agreement that would have allowed Syrian refugees to settle there.

In Niagara Falls, Mayor Paul Dyster is keeping his lips sealed, but his membership in an organization called Cities United for Immigration Action speaks volumes. The organization is actually lobbying to allow more than the 10,000 Syrian refugees President Barack Obama said the country would accept.

Dyster believes that Syrian refugees, most of whom don’t speak English and some of whom may be terrorists, are the answer to the threats we have already seen, Texas can participate in any program that will result in Syrian refugees being resettled in Texas, Abbott said in a letter to Obama.

“Texas Gov. Greg Abbott went further, calling on Obama to halt all plans to accept refugees coming to his state. Currently, the only requirement for Syrian refugees is that they don’t have outstanding international arrest warrants on them,” Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker said.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott went further, calling on Obama to halt all plans to accept refugees coming to his state. Currently, the only requirement for Syrian refugees is that they don’t have outstanding international arrest warrants on them.

“Dear Mr. President, can you tell me why you want to bring Syrian refugees to my state?”

“Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster said he wants some of those to live in the city.”

“We are a community of good neighbors – and having the experience of handling immigrants and refugee populations, especially during recent years – will be opening our arms again to help Syrians in need.”

As Mayor Paul Dyster shows - we may all need guns - if the Obama Dyster plan to bring Syrian refugees goes through.

Machine gun wielding terrorists opened fire on a number of sidewalk cafes in Paris before blowing themselves up with bombing equipment's found dark.

Here the dead and dying lie side by side. President Barack Obama said he still plans to bring 10,000 Syrian refugees to the country despite the atrocity, and Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster said he wants some of those to live in the city.

New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan is the first Democrat to express support for halting the flow of refugees to the U.S. pending further assurances that the refugee vetting process is adequate.

“The Governor has always made clear that we must ensure robust refugee screening to protect American citizens, and the Governor believes that the federal government should halt acceptance of refugees from Syria until intelligence and defense officials can assure that the process for vetting all refugees, including those from Syria, is as robust as possible to ensure the safety of the American people,” she said in a statement.

President Barack Obama called the reaction “ shortsighted.”

“The United States has to step up and do its part,” Obama said. “And when I hear folks say that, well, maybe we should just admit the Christians but not the Muslims, I hear political leaders suggesting that there would be a religious test for which person who’s fleeing from a war-torn country is admitted, when some of these folks themselves come from families who benefited from protection when they were fleeing political persecution, that’s shortsighted.”

That phrase, uttered many times this week by governors across the country and the leaders of many European nations, reflects the growing concern of many that the open door immigration policy offered to Syrian refugees was a mistake.

As Mayor Paul Dyster shows - we may all need guns - if the Obama Dyster plan to bring Syrian refugees goes through.

As Mayor Paul Dyster shows - we may all need guns - if the Obama Dyster plan to bring Syrian refugees goes through.
As Predicted, Dyster Parking Plan Resurrected Following Election Win

Mike Hudson

Well before the election season, the Niagara Falls Reporter predicted that a citywide parking plan, on which the Dyster administration has already wasted $112,330 om, would be resurrected should the mayor manage to get reelected.

Dyster was put back in office by fewer than 50 percent of the voters who turned out for the three-way race that saw him defeat write-in candidate Glenn Choolokian and Republican John Accardo, and now the moribund parking plan has been resurrected.

We must be psychic!

"Between now and the new year we'll be voting on parking stations," city Council Chairman Andrew Touma said last week. "Not only that, but I think it's important that we see what's happening in the city as well." Dyster hired the Chicago based Desman Associates to launch a study of the city's alleged "parking problem" and come up with a solution as though money was no object, since Dyster is on payment for parking schemes, with revenue derived from the dwindling local share of the slot machine revenue at the Seneca Niagara Casino.

In back of October of 2013, Desman Associates billed the city a whopping $45,000 for a 22-page report that didn't contain 5,000 words of text that recommended that they, Desman Associates, be permitted to implement the new parking program.

That was long on cost, but short on details. As it stands now, what Desman calls "Phase I" of the project will see meters installed on Niagara Street and Rainbow Boulevard downtown, along with cross streets linking the two.

In May of this year, the city Council rejected the Dyster administration's recommendation to authorize a $258,950 contract with Ber-National Automation, Inc., a company that won a bid to install about 40 meters in the Niagara complex at the corner of Niagara Street and Rainbow Boulevard North. To think that he might be tapped by the Dyster administration for the first parking czar strains credibility, however.

More likely, any new hires will be scooped from the pond scum of those who helped Dyster achieve victory in the in 2015 election despite receiving only 47 percent of the vote. This "friends and family approach" was used successfully in the hiring of garage supervisor D'Angelo, and a Democratic committeewoman and virulent Dyster supporter who helped orchestrate the smear campaign that drove formerly popular city Councilman Sam Fruscione from office in 2013. In what was supposed to be a temporary job when Dyster first announced it, the position was made permanent. She's currently costing city taxpayers $48,000 a year in wages and benefits.

Despite the fact that metered parking is common in municipalities large and small all across this great land of ours, making it work in Niagara Falls has always seemed like an impossible dream.

Former Mayor Irene Elia and former Mayor Vince Anello each had their own pet parking schemes, cooked up by consultants and paid for by those unfortunate enough to vote for them in the city of Niagara Falls. Neither of those ended up anywhere, and the new one isn't likely to either, but Dyster seems bound, set and determined to have his own failed parking plan.

Dyster's proposal, which has already cost taxpayers dearly, is not in any significant way different than the parking plans proposed by former Elia or Anello, which resulted in the waste of hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars, ripped up sidewalks and parking meter poles that never had any meters installed on top of them.

"This is low hanging fruit as far as available revenue," Dyster said. What revenue? Spending more than a million dollars to make around $80,000 a year after expenses. Only men such as Dyster and Touma, who have never run a successful business or provided a single private sector job in their lives, would think the plan had any merit.

City councilman Robert Anderson who lost his seat in the recent election, said metered parking will hurt business downtown and anywhere else it is put in place.

"There is no demand in the winter for downtown parking," he said. "It could be a deterrent to doing business in winter. Think about it. Suppose you are thinking about making a trip to Starbucks in January. You can go downtown and pay $3 each to park for two hours or you can go to Starbucks in LaSalle and park for free. So which are you going to choose?"

And while Dyster is telling anyone who will listen that metered parking will extend north of Niagara Street, why has Desman Associates labeled that portion of the Project as "impossible dream." Why Desman would be bragging about its participation in the scheme is curious. Those wanting to park their cars on Chicago streets found the rates had gone up as much as fourfold once the plan was implemented.

Meters jammed and overflowed when they couldn't hold enough change for the new prices. In other areas, new electronic meters had been installed, but many of them didn't give receipts or failed to work entirely. And free parking on Sundays was a thing of the past. The meter plan sparked mass outrage in Chicago. There were protests and attempts to organize a boycott. But the city had leased its 36,000 meters to a private Morgan Stanley-led consortium in exchange for $1.2 billion in up-front revenue. The length of the lease was 75 years.

And if the meter situation seemed like a bad deal for Chicago's parkers, it would soon become clear that it was an even worse one for the city's taxpayers.

An inspector general's report found that the deal was worth almost $1 billion more than the city had gotten for it. Not only would the city never have a chance to recoup what they paid in new meter revenue for three-quarters of a century, walking represents an answered prayer insofar as creating a new revenue stream for the nearly bankrupt city is concerned, are they really going to be happy with a paltry $80,000 a year about enough to pay the salary and benefit package for one city policeman?

Still Touma is insisting that the new program will not target local residents. Unless it is decided it should.

"Our residents are paying local taxes they shouldn't have to pay the rate others pay to park here," Touma said. "Although, we have to weigh all our options."

We wouldn't trust either Touma or Dyster to run a game of three card monte. In their wisdom, a plurality of Niagara Falls voters decided to trust them with running a $100 million corporation.

You get what you pay for.

Council chairman Andrew Touma has a plan in case you don't pay a parking ticket.

Desman’s Chicago Parking Plan a Nightmare for Windy City Taxpayers

Mike Hudson

A quick visit to Mayor Paul Dyster’s handpicked parking consultant Desman and Associates website finds the company boasting about the important role it played in the privatization of parking meters in the city of Chicago.

“Working with Morgan Stanley and the rest of the team, Desman provided due diligence efforts and technical advisory services in support of Morgan Stanley’s successful bid for the 75-year lease concession for the Chicago Metropolitan Parking System,” the website states. Desman projected both the short-term and long-term impact of changes in parking demand and operations on the revenue and expenses of the parking system over the lease period.”

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An inspector general’s report found that the deal was worth almost $1 billion more than the city had gotten for it. Not only would the city never have a chance to recoup what they paid in new meter revenue for three-quarters of a century, clauses buried in the contract required it to reimburse the company for lost meter revenue.

The city was billed for allowing construction of new parking garages, for handing out disabled parking placards, for closing the streets for festivals. The current bill stands at $61 million.

And if all that wasn’t bad enough, some of those involved in the deal are now the target of a federal bribery investigation.

The Desman parking plan in Chicago has been an utter disaster. Bad for those who have to use it, awful for the taxpayers and, in all likelihood, corrupt.

In its’ wake, it’s hard not to wonder what it was about the company that attracted Dyster? Dyster, who enthusiastically backed Mayor Irene Elia’s parking program as a member of the City Council in the early years of the new century, has apparently swallowed completely Desman’s incredibly optimistic projection of $1 million in new revenue annually.

The offices of Desman Associates are located on North Clark Street in Chicago. Ironically it was in a parking garage on North Clark Street that nine men associated with the Irish North Side Gang were lined up and gunned down in the infamous St. Valentine’s Day Massacre of 1929.
None Dare Call It Treason! Revisited from Niagara Reporter 2-17-15

Free speech, like freedom itself, isn’t free. It’s held only through eternal vigilance. Since free speech is guaranteed by the first amendment of the Constitution there can be little doubt in the minds of normal, well adjusted, citizens of this nation that the Constitution is fully buttressed by this single amendment. In this cartoon Skrlin tackles the question of a free press in relation to the Reporter and a story in last week’s edition detailing how the publisher appears to have run afoul of the powers that be due to the coverage of the Oyster administration. This latest Skrlin rendering isn’t so much humorous as it is poignant in its portrayal as to how the newspaper has come under attack as a virtual sitting duck...seemingly targeted by powerful state-wide entities. The Reporter receives both barrels in this graphic episode in the face of the viewer this cartoon causes one to mourn for the troubling attack on the right of free speech...a right that has been treasured since the United States drew its first breath in 1776.

Jonathan Q. Adams
NIFTY FIFTY BAR & GRILL

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Laborers Local #91 would like to wish everyone a very Happy and Safe Thanksgiving especially all of our members – active and retired, our apprentices, all of our signatory contractors, our trustees, our business and banking partners, our suppliers, our supportive elected officials and all family members from each of the above mentioned groups. Celebrate the true meaning of this holiday and give thanks for what we have, how we came to have it and who provided it for us. This tradition of giving thanks originated in Europe and was brought to the shores of this then new land centuries ago. Despite being clouded in sales, shopping, football games and overindulging in food, the holiday should remain a day to give thanks for the blessings in our lives. We all have things in life to be thankful for, some more than others, so please remember to give to those less fortunate who may be struggling in these difficult economic times.

The Union, Pension and Training Offices will be closed on Thursday November 26 & Friday November 27 for the holiday. For all active and retired members, please call Dianna before the close of business tomorrow Friday November 20th to RSVP for the LECET Christmas Party which will be on Saturday December 5th from noon until 4PM. We need an accurate count and the deadline has now officially passed.
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Put a flame under it.
A suggestion for our “newly elected” eight people in a room: Most successful private businesses put a great deal of emphasis on innovation, new products, and ways to deliver services. Local governments also need to continually seek ways to deliver services better, less expensively and faster.

NT, however, has had a problem, for at least the last decade of ordering costly studies, consultant reports, etc., and announcing them as a fait accompli (something that has been done and cannot be changed). Unfortunately for NT residents, the only thing that ever seems to be “done” is the issuing of these studies and reports with all the political braggadocio those proudly trying to sound like they are accomplishing things by publishing bragging of those proudly trying to sound in office at the time could/can muster, with reports with all the political braggadocio those to be “done” is the issuing of these studies and cannot be changed). Unfortunately as a fait accompli (something that has been done and cannot be changed). Unfortunately as a fait accompli (something that has been done and cannot be changed). Unfortunately as a fait accompli (something that has been done and cannot be changed). Unfortunately as a fait accompli (something that has been done and cannot be changed). Unfortunately as a fait accompli (something that has been done and cannot be changed).

A review of the last ten years, or in fact, fifty or more years, of the former Tonawanda News, indicates a serious amount of taxpayer money for one-time investments in projects that would enhance services, save money, provide better customer (taxpayer and resident) service, etc. Projects that will cut the red tape and make it easier for citizens to access city services should be considered for these loans.

Create an apolitical panel (if such a thing is possible in NT or Niagara County) and use the fund for loans to be paid back within five years, with city agencies or departments providing business plans showing how they expect to meet their obligations for developing the concept. Beyond a doubt, NT’s website is an embarrassment which the newly elected City Clerk-Treasurer has promised to give attention to. One thing missing from the website is an email address for the City Clerk-Treasurer’s office.

Why does the City Charter posted on the website have (Article III, Division 1, Section 3.004 (a)): “The city clerk-treasurer is subject to removal or suspension by the mayor in accordance with the provisions of this section. All appointed officers are subject to removal or suspension by the appointing authority in accordance with the provisions of this section.”

The posted charter continues with more instructions. Why are we voting for a city clerk-treasurer if he/she is subject to removal or suspension by the mayor? Is this just a case of the wrong version of the charter remaining on the website? Or perhaps not properly corrected when it became an elected position?

Section 3.029 does say, “The officials of the city elected by the voters are the mayor, the council members, the city attorney and the city clerk-treasurer.” At the end of the charter (which went into effect January 1, 2002), under Article VII, Sec. 7.004 it lists “Revisions to the charter.” “Effective on March 1, 2009, the position of city clerk shall be abolished. All duties and obligations formerly held by the city clerk shall be assumed by the city treasurer whose position shall be renamed as the city clerk-treasurer.” This still doesn’t clarify that the city-­clerk treasurer is stated in the earlier portion as “subject to removal or suspension by the mayor.”

When “revisions” are made, perhaps the use of asterisks could be used in the relevant portions to denote that a change is listed at the end?

The charter also needs to include term limits. NT needs an intelligent, informed electorate that tosses out bad politicians in elections and insures that genuine public servants are kept in office. It isn’t supposed to be a lifelong income. Two terms are plenty for any elected official.

Sweeney Payne

“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

NIAGARA FALLS REPORTER NOV 19 – NOV 25, 2015

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Only in NT: More Suggestions for Elected Eight People in a Room

Everyone Welcome! What a Party!!!

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NOV 21

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Carl Filbert Performs at the Bakery Lounge

Niagara Falls, NY - Local musician / vocalist Carl Filbert will perform on Thanksgiving Eve at the Bakery Lounge, 3004 Niagara St., Niagara Falls, NY on November 25, 2015. Filbert will bring his casual manor and bluesy voice to the Bakery to celebrate the beginnings of the holiday season. Proprietors, Kevin and David Brown invite the public to enjoy a fabulous dinner before or during the show. Also included will be a live DJ spinning dance and party favorites throughout the evening. Filbert begins at 8:30.

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State Audit of ECC Still Not Ready

Tony Farina

Last March, we reported that state auditors were in the final stages of the first full review of Erie Community College’s finances in 20 years, reportedly sparked by complaints of lax controls in managing taxpayer and student dollars at ECC. The audit had begun in October of 2014.

In that same story, we reported that a spokesman for State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli would not confirm the financial review had been sparked by complaints from local watchdogs, calling it “a standard audit” that was expected to be completed by early spring.

Early spring is in the rearview mirror and Thanksgiving is fast approaching and the results of that “standard audit” have still not been released. I asked a spokesman from the state comptroller’s office this week if this audit was setting a record for longevity and he could only chuckle.

Officially, the audit now could be released next month, according to DiNapoli’s office, but there is no guarantee at this time that it will be ready before the end of the year. The conclusion any fair observer can reasonably draw is that this audit turned out to be anything but “standard,” and as we reported several times state auditors had their hands full dealing with Kristin Klein Wheaton, ECC’s president, for lax controls at ECC.

We have also written about the many complaints from administrators and others at ECC about Quinn’s handling of the college’s fiscal affairs and the lack of oversight by the Board of Directors.

In fact, in recent days I have learned that the board is rubber stamping just about everything that Quinn and Wheaton put on the table, meaning there is no checks on the Quinn administration from the board of directors. There are several projects in the works at ECC, including construction of the $30 million STEM building at the North campus, but the board reportedly is letting Quinn call the shots, period.

If any light is to be shed on what’s happened at ECC under Quinn’s leadership, it looks like it will come from state auditors although the credibility of an audit so long in the making could be suspect. It could be that Quinn’s team has taken serious issue with the audit’s findings and that could be the reason for the delay. Whatever the reason, we still don’t have the results of an audit of a school with serious financial troubles and another tuition hike likely. We’ll keep you posted.

Bills Have Shot to Knock Off Banged Up Patriots

Tony Farina

Anyone who has followed my coverage of the Buffalo Bills over the last several years knows that I’m anything but a cheerleader for this franchise and it will take more than a couple of wins over the Dolphins and the Jets to convince me that this is the year the NFL will come to an end.

But I have some hope that this year’s team may have the firepower to make a real run and it could start on Monday night when the now healthy Bills (5 – 4) take on the banged up New England Patriots and coupled with the offensive line problems, Brady may not be able to put up the kind of numbers that he did earlier in the season in the 40 – 32 win at the Ralph. The Patriots have pretty much owned the Bills for a very long time, winning 27 of the last 30 games, but maybe Rex Ryan and crew can turn the tables on Bill Belichick and Brady next Monday night and give themselves a much-needed win against the reigning champions.

I’m not predicting a Bills victory, but I do think that Buffalo is showing off the kind of offensive punch that has been missing during the lengthy playoff drought and if the defense can pressure Brady, a win is possible.

LeSean McCoy and Karlos Williams give the Bills a strong ground game, both showing speed and power, and if wide receiver Sammy Watkins can stay on the field, he puts great pressure on a suspect Patriots’ secondary and could open things up for the other Bills receivers.

There is always a danger in falling for the Bills because they have a legacy of failure that is hard to forget. But Wilson is gone and his chief money generator, Russ Brandon, has assumed a lower football profile, and to me those are positives in the development of the team now owned by fricking kingpin Terry Pegula. We haven’t seen too much of him, either, and Coach Rex Ryan is now the face of the franchise, as he should be, and while the Bills struggled early, Ryan has brought them back and they are finally healthy and have no excuses against a Patriots team that looks vulnerable.

A man suffered a broken bone in his foot and will miss the game against the Bills on Monday night in Foxboro Stadium and may be sidelined for several games. The Patriots are also hurting on the offensive line and Brady is paying the price although they all band together and try to turn the game around. A very determined effort by the Giants who unfortu-

nately didn’t finish the game.

Brady looked nearly human, throwing a goal line interception and barely escaping the pocket inside two minutes when Landon Collins dropped what probably would have been a game-clinching interception for the Giants. Given life, the champion Patriots pulled out a victory.

“We got to find different ways,” Brady said after the game. “Guys stepped in when Ju-

nian got hurt. We’re down a bunch of tackles and guys are playing out of position, and I think we just keep grinding our way through it. You’ve got to find different ways to win.”

Brady and the Pats did find a way to win, just like they did in the last Super Bowl when the Seahawks gave them a chance with a pass on the goal line that the Patriots intercepted giving them their fourth Lombardi Trophy.

But I believe the injury to Edelman and the makeshift offensive line makes the Pats vulnerable and gives the healthy Bills a fighting chance to beat the Super Bowl champs and hand them their first defeat of the season.

Now I know the Pats still have Brady and TE Rob Gronkowski who scored on a 76-yard pass play against the Giants, calling the victory a “good win.”

Tony Farina
ANNALS OF JUSTICE

A 2015 decision of the Georgia Supreme Court has created a puzzle for drunk driver enforcement. In Georgia (and other states), blood alcohol tests are "voluntary" (to bypass the issue of whether drivers can be forced, or even pressured, to endure a test that ultimately helps to convict them), but the Georgia court has ruled, against custom, that a "consenting" driver might be "too drunk to appreciate the consent"—in which case, the test results would be inadmissible in court. Equally awkwardly, prosecutors would be forced to argue that the drunk driver—too drunk to handle a motor vehicle—was still sober enough to give knowledgeable consent. Atlanta's WSB-TV reported in October that judges statewide are grappling with the issue.

RECURRING THEMES (RECENT INSTANCES OF FAMILIAR WEIRD BEHAVIORS)

- Funerals and burials, in the United States and elsewhere, are no longer always so staid. Most famously, one man was, per his instructions, lowered to the ground inside his beloved Cadillac; dressing corpses in fanciful outfits (such as the Green Lantern) is not unheard of. In October, a 20-year-old man in Macomb Township, Michigan, became the most recent alleged drunk driver to reveal himself in the most awkward of ways: by accidentally swerving into the midst of a sheriff's deputies' roadside stop—of another alleged drunk driver. (Coincidentally, both arrestees are 20 and registered matching 0.17 blood-alcohol readings.)
- College "Inclusiveness" to the Next Level: "Service" animals (mostly guide dogs) are ones that have been specially trained to provide help for people with disabilities, but untrained "comfort" animals are also privileged for those diagnosed with panic attacks or depression. In an October report on college students hoping to keep their pets in no-animal dorms, The New York Times noted that school officials have entertained student requests for the "comfort" of (besides dogs and cats) lizards, potbellied pigs, tarantulas, ferrets, guinea pigs and "sugar gliders" (nocturnal, flying, six-ounce Australian marsupials). Informal Justice Department guidelines rule out only animals that are aggressive or destructive or that trigger other students' allergies.
- Raised Right—or Snitch in-Training? In September, Audrey McColm, 25, traffic-stopped in Randolph County, Indiana, for driving "erratically," became the latest parent ratted out by her child. When Mom denied having been drinking, her daughter, 7, blurted out, "Yes, you have, Mom." McColm registered 0.237, had nearly hit another officer's car head-on, and was so hammered that she "urged" a different officer to "shoot her in the head."
- A chapter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals undertook one of its favorite consciousness-raising tactics in August, demanding that Pennsylvania officials erect a roadside grave marker near Lancaster at the spot where a tractor-trailer hauling 80 pigs overturned, killing several of them. The "terrified animals" that suffered traumatic deaths should be memorialized by the community, PETA said. The pigs, of course, would have eventually found their way to a slaughterhouse, and it is possible that they were euthanized as a result of the accident passed more peacefully than the "survivors."
- In October, The Washington Post and the New York Post separately reported recent episodes of government agencies keeping high-earning employees on the payroll for more than a year with no job assignment, because the agencies were unable to adjudicate their misconduct cases. Almost 100 shuffled Homeland Security employees turned up in a Washington Post Freedom of Information Act request, and one information technology analyst warehoused by the New York City employee pension fund said she had earned $1.5 million over 10 years doing absolutely no work for the city. "I watched movies," said Niki Murphy. "I crocheted—right in front of (supervisors)."
- Drivers who blindly follow their vehicle's satellite navigation with disastrous results are almost No Longer Weird, but a truck driver's mishap in Ashton, England, in October still seemed worthy of reporting—in that he was working for a company called Dachser Intelligent Logistics when his tractor-trailer got stuck in a narrow alley (directed there by the sat-nav, in violation of all common sense). (Bonus: It was not the first time sat-nav had misdirected a vehicle into the same alley; the town had even placed a formal traffic sign at the approach to the alley: "Do Not Follow Sat Nav Next Left.")

UPDATES

- In October, the federal government finally unloaded the two New Hampshire properties it seized in 2007 from dentist Elaine Brown and her husband (after a nine-month standoff following their vow to die rather than pay their back taxes to the IRS). Their 100-acre "compound" became a magnet at the time for an array of "sovereigns" and tax-resisters, who were rumored to have booby-trapped the property to ward off law enforcement—and the 2015 auction only partially guaranteed that the property was free of hidden explosives. (News of the Weird's 2007 story included Dr. Brown as one of three U.S. dentists who, independent of each other, had become obsessed about federal taxes. The Browns are serving 30-year prison terms.)
- High school principal George Kenney believes he has a gift to aid students' concentration abilities—hypnosis—and practiced it extensively at North Port High in Sarasota, Florida, until 2011, when three of his students died in separate incidents (two by suicide). While Kenney enjoys retirement in North Carolina, the Sarasota school board did not close the chapter until October 2015 when it granted $200,000 settlements to the families of the three students. The lawsuits complained of Kenney's unlicensed "medical procedure," which altered the "underdeveloped" teenage brain—but Kenney had also pointed to improvements in studying by other students.

EVADE THE FIREALARM DAILY AT WWW.WEIRDUNIVERSE.NET OR SEND EMAILS TO WEIRDNEWS@EARTHLINK.NET
**EVENTS | CALENDAR**

**ACCURACY | FOCUS | nltrans | 9pm - 1am Cooking Show. Specials include pig & apple chowder, buffalo meatloaf, & special drinks. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED.**

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<thead>
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**MON NOV 23**

**MUSIC**

**ACOUSTIC/FOLK**

Nietzschas - 8pm Songwriter Showcase, free.

**BLUES**

Abbey Square - 8pm Blues Night feat. Harvey & the Hurricanes.

**DANCE/EDUCATIONAL**

Duke's Bar - 8pm DBGB Door Monday Night Football fest. a free halftime buffet w/ team inspired 100” TV followed by ident DJs playing beer in Rock N Roll.

Essex St. Bar - 10pm Vinyl Friday w/ Eric Kendra.

**KARAOKE**

Hot Mama's Caravan - 9pm Best Karaoke w/ Josh Gage.

The Alley Cat - 8pm open Mic w/ Billy Gage.

**ROCK**

Buffalo Iron Works - 9pm Post Sabres w/ Quiz Night in Buffalo.

Tender Joe Donohue follow by the Street Preachers.

**TUES NOV 24**

**MUSIC**

Blaffey's & Barley - 7:30 Tuesday Night: Elvis Night. Brighten the Amazing Street Kings w/ Dave Brown, Todd Hackman, Rhino, Bruce Maple & Speedy Parker.

**CELEBRITY**

Tudor Lounge - 10pm Open Mic Comedy hosted by Mama Reg.

**EXHIBITS**


Kenan Center - 4pm-7pm Neollow: $10, $5/ students; 7:30-10pm Discussion: “The Albright-Knox: Impressionist Revolution, 1860â–1910.”

**LECTURES/PRESENTATIONS**

Canisius College - 7-8pm Canisius College Center for Litigation Justice. Featuring: Abbott and Cuban.. Benefits of New Relationships w/ William Franklin, Bishop/Chess Master of New York, and others from recent speakers to individual suggestions to be given.

Church of Science of Buffalo - 7pm Dianetics Lecture

Jewish Community of Greater Buffalo/Benderson Family Building - 7-8:30pm Author Daniel Horowitz. On the History of Buffalo Jewish experience and book signing. @ Jewish Centre of Buffalo/535 Main St.

Santoros - 7-8pm Author Daniel Horowitz. Cup, followed by reception and free book signing. 54 x 85,405.

**RECREATION/GAMES**

Restaurant & Lounge - 8pm Movie Night Tonight.

Shuminari's Bar & Grill - 9pm Open Mic hosted by B.B. King, let's talk and come w/ questions & materials.

**SUNDAY NOV 22**

**MUSIC**

Blaffey's & Barley - 7:30 Tuesday Night: Elvis Night. Brighten the Amazing Street Kings w/ Dave Brown, Todd Hackman, Rhino, Bruce Maple & Speedy Parker.

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is it that time already? It seems as though I was just in jeans and a tee shirt. It’s past the middle of November which means it’s Celebration season. This classic American IPA is one of the oldest of its kind. First brewed in 1981, Celebration Ale is one of the very few hop forward winter holiday beers; much different then and even now than your typical spiced winter ale. You could say that Sierra Nevada considers fresh dried hops as the “spice” for theirs. The brewing team at Sierra Nevada are masters at producing some of the world’s finest hopped up beers and Celebration is a shining point in their portfolio. If American IPA has a gold standard for current comparisons, this would be it. Defined by a bold blend of minty pine and citrus in the nose followed by a nutty caramel malt body and a clean bitterness, this IPA has classic written all over it. It makes me want to go back to the year of my birth to see how the beer has changed over the last 34 years. Beer is, of course, a farm product and variations in barley malt yields, hop alpha/beta acids and many other contributing flavor compounds result in a slightly different beer every year, no matter what. What I do know is that I certainly will be having more Sierra with my Thanksgiving dinner. This beer is delicious, just like my mom’s pumpkin pie!

**COMMUNITY BEER WORKS**

**ADAMBIER**

**ABV**: 8.8%

- **PAUL MARKO**

Adambier. Yes, this is a beer style and not just the pint left at the bar by your buddy Adam. Granted, Adambier is rare, with only a handful of examples on sites like RateBeer or Untappd. It’s an old, largely forgotten style originally from Dortmund, Germany—an intense, dark, complex ale (yes, an ale, not a lager) aged in oak barrels, which is sometimes sour. Think of it as an interloper between an old ale, altbier, wild beer, and a barleywine. The tricky thing about beers of this nature (extinct styles, etc.) is that while historical references to the beers’ flavors and recipes exist, there are limited examples out there to taste, so brewers are sort of winging it. Well, our pals at Community Beer Works have taken an Adambier on wing—and this small batch, limited release beer soars high in November skies! This reviewer’s only previous experience with Adambier was with the truly spectacular “Adam” from Portland, Oregon’s Hair of the Dog brewery. There are aged bottles of “Adam” going for $2000 in traders markets, so my expectations were piqued and high for CBW’s offering. With a nose like a strong Schwartzbier, initial thoughts lean towards a standard malty, German offering, but that’s when CBW’s Adambier kicks into overdrive. Beachwood smoked barley from Bamberg offers a whiff of smoke, which lingers over the subtle oak notes obtained in its barreling. The 8.8% ABV bites, but not hard, revealing a deliciously layered malty finish—with just enough hops to add complexity. Adambier is like the German version of the Belgian dubbel. Enjoy CBW’s interpretation now!
Aries: (March 21 - April 19)

After meeting you, people understand why some animals eat their young. You are really easy to get along with, once you people learn to worship you. Here’s a hint. If someone doesn’t answer you the first 25 times, what makes you think the next 25 will work?

Taurus: (April 20 - May 20)

Everybody has the right to be ugly, but you abuse the privilege. The fact that no one understands you doesn’t mean you’re an artist. Mirrors don’t talk but lucky for you they don’t laugh. People are not anti-social, they just don’t like you.

Gemini: (May 21 - June 20)

Since ignorance is bliss you are one of the happiest persons alive. You’ve got a lot of Karma to burn off. You help people realize there are some really stupid people in this world. You can’t get married to your sweetheart because there’s a law against it.

Cancer: (June 21 - July 22)

Set aside special time to humiliate yourself. You started out with nothing and still have most of it left. Earth is full. Go home. Start numbering your toilet paper. Anyone who told you to be yourself couldn’t have given you worse advice.

Leo: (July 23 - August 22)

You finally realize that ugly thing growing out of your neck... is your head...Talking to you seems as appealing as playing leapfrog with unicorns. Do you ever wonder what life would be like if you had had enough oxygen at birth? You are refreshed and challenged by your unique point of view. Move off this planet!

Libra: (September 23 - October 22)

People say you are dark and handsome -- when it’s dark you’re handsome! Beauty is skin deep, but ugly is to the bone. You still love nature, despite what it did to you. People don’t know what makes you so stupid, but they know it really works!

Scorpio: (October 23 - November 21)

People say you’re two faced, but really if you had two faces why would you wear that one? How about a little less questions and a little more shut the hell up? Dom Perignon is not a Mafia boss. You have a terribly empty feeling - in your skull.

Sagittarius: (November 22 - December 21)

You have very striking features, which makes you wonder how often exactly have you been struck? The Village just called. They said they were missing their town idiot. You don’t think you are a fool. But then what’s your opinion against thousands of others?

Capricorn: (December 22 - January 19)

When you try, pick up line “Haven’t I seen you somewhere before?” You receive startling answer, “Yeah, that’s why I don’t go there anymore.” Since you have your whole life to be a jerk...why don’t you take a day off. You have your head examined but the doctors found nothing there.

Aquarius: (January 20 - February 18)

When you try, pick up line “Your place or mine?” You receive intelligent answer. “Both, you go to yours, I’ll go to mine!” If people stand close enough to you, they can hear the ocean. Keep talking, someday you’ll say something intelligent.

Pisces: (February 19 - March 20)

People like you don’t grow from trees. They swing from them! Beauty is skin deep, but ugly is to the bone. You still love nature, despite what it did to you. People don’t know what you’re thinking.

Virgo: (August 23 - September 22)

You look good at a DISTANCE! Whatever kind of look you were going for, you missed. Jesus loves you but everyone else thinks you’re an idiot. You must confront this question: Do you want people to accept you as you are or do you want them to like you?
Take-out & Delivery

Pizza Junction
“A SLICE ABOVE THE REST”

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At the Nifty Fifty,
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716-283-7700
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These guys make everything from scratch!

FREE APPETIZER
with purchase of 2 entrees and a beverage
Not valid with other offers. Dine in only.

DELIVERY SPECIAL
Large pie 1 topping + 10 wings
$27.99

PIZZA JUNCTION FISH FRY
Served with choice of coleslaw or salad and choice of potato.

LUNCH SPECIAL
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$5

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Sat: 8am - 5pm
Sun: 9am - 5pm

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(site of the old LaBruschetta)

Buen servicio amistoso

716 297 4500
NOW SERVING BEER, WINE & LIQUOR
Owner and chef Rebeca Montes

20% OFF
20% OFF the entire order
Only 1 coupon per table. Cannot be combined with other offers. Dine in ONLY.

20% de descuento en el total de la cuenta

We also have an American menu & a kid’s menu.

Think NAPA Gifts

8.99
Original E-Z Red Super Bright Pocket Light

14.99
Mechanica Mechanica

59.99
Craftsman 125-pc. 3/8” & Metric Tool Set w/ Case

39.99
Craftsman 116-pc 3-pc. Rachet Set

100.00
PEAK 12-vSpotlight w/32” Cord

2450 Military Rd. 297-9000

Now serving beer, wine & liquor

Wonderful Food
Generous Portions

Now serving beer, wine & liquor

Servicio amable

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