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THE NIAGARA REPORTER

FREE

August 19th, 2020 - September 1st, 2020

NiagaraFallsReporter.com

Vol. 20, No. 47

FREE

Super Clips

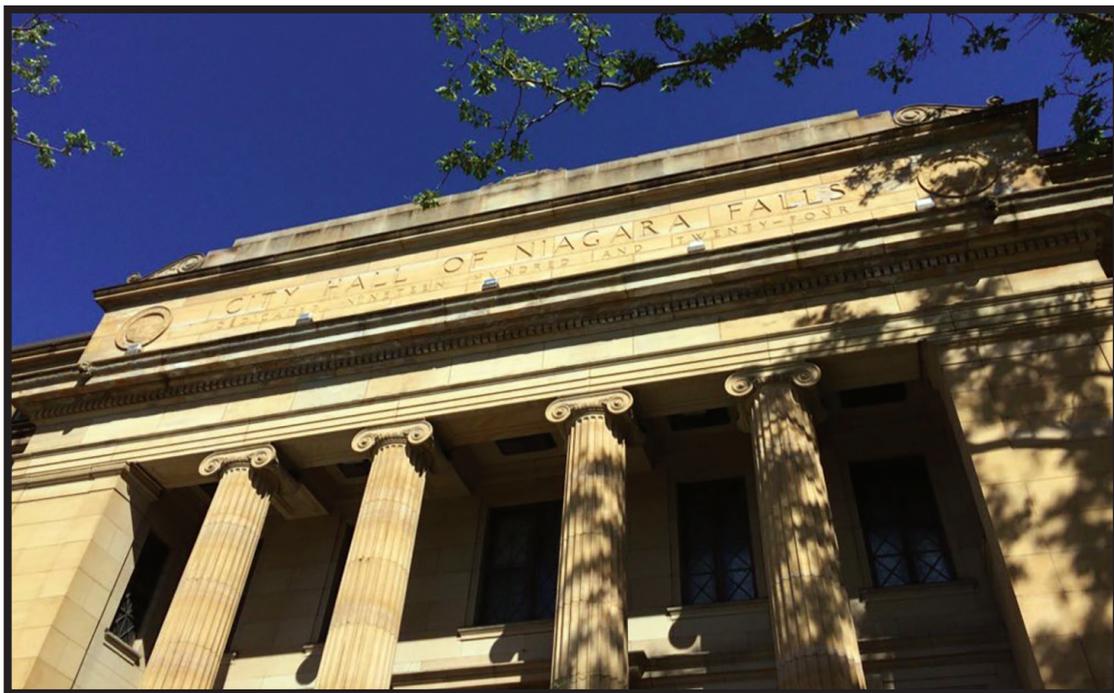


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(Cont. on pg. 3)

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THE CRIME PAGE 4

Niagara Falls

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It's a boy! And a girl! Aquarium of Niagara Announces Penguin Chicks' Names & Gender

By: Staff Reporter

The newest members of the Aquarium of Niagara's Humboldt penguin colony are a male named "Smitty" and a female named "Jules."

The chicks hatched in April and were the first penguin chicks to hatch at the Aquarium since 2004. They are the offspring of "PJ, Jr."

(Cont. on pg. 2)

Why Is Maziarz Always on the Opposite Side of the People of Niagara County?

By: Mary Fredericks

Why does it seem you can pick any major issue that a community in Niagara County opposes and somehow George Maziarz was working the other side?

Let me explain. As state senator, Maziarz crafted an image as someone who wielded

(Cont. on pg. 6)

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NIAGARA FALLS

Aquarium of Niagara Cont.



and “Blanca” who came to the Aquarium in 2019 from the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, W.A. as part of Association of Zoos and Aquarium’s (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP) for the vulnerable Humboldt penguin species. Through the SSP, the Aquarium works with other AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums to match genetically strong penguins and ensure a thriving, sustainable penguin population under human care.

The reinstatement of the Aquarium’s Humboldt penguin breeding program was made possible by the \$3.6 million renovation of its penguin exhibit, Penguin Coast, in 2018. Two of the Aquarium’s donors who were involved with making substantial gifts towards Penguin Coast were afforded the opportunity to name the chicks.

Since Humboldt penguin sexes can only be determined by a blood test, the chicks were informally named Alpha and Beta during the first few months of their lives. The Aquarium acquired blood samples of the penguin chicks earlier this summer which revealed that they are male and female.

“The Aquarium is proud to give an exciting update on our newest arrivals to our friends across Western New York,” said Executive Director Gary Siddall. “We’re excited for the community to come and officially meet the penguin chicks and get to know their playful personalities.”

The chicks are now on public display in the Penguin Coast exhibit.



City Hall Refuse Payment Extended and Parking Violations to Use Mail Drop Box

Staff Reporter

The city of Niagara Falls is extending the due date for collection of the first installment of the refuse fee from August 15, to August 31.

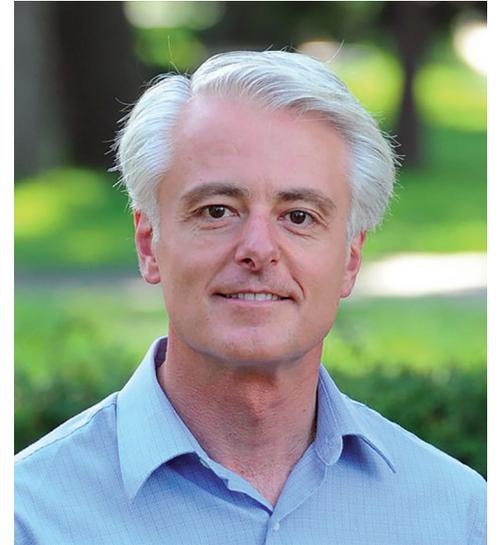
In response to calls received, Mayor Robert Restaino is extending the payment date in order to address outstanding service change requests.

The city is advising residents who have already contacted City Hall or the Department of Public Works that there is no need to contact them again, as there is a heavy volume of repeat calls. Any outstanding questions or concerns from residents, which have already been submitted via phone or online, will be addressed by the Department of Public Works on or before August 21, 2020.

For any new concerns, please contact the Department of Public Works at (716) 286-4826.

Drop Box for Parking Tickets

In response to COVID-19 guidelines, the City of Niagara Falls is installing a drop box at the entrance of the Municipal Court Building at 1925 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY for parking violation fines, as an



Mayor Robert M. Restaino.

effort to decrease foot traffic at the city’s courthouse.

People coming to the Municipal Court building to pay parking fines are asked to insert their paperwork and payment into the drop box instead of going inside to the parking violations window.

If anyone has a questions about their parking violation fine, they are encouraged to call (716) 286-4950 to help avoid in person interactions and limit the number of people within the building per COVID-19 guidelines.

NIAGARA



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Niagara Falls: BankOnBuffalo, City Hall (basement), The Como (restaurant, deli, & airport locations), DiCamillo Bakery (all locations), Dollar General (Portage, Military, & Pine) Frankie’s Donuts, John Duke Center, Key Bank (800 Main St.), Memorial Medical Center (entrance to lobby), Michael’s Restaurant, Marketside Restaurant, Mom’s Restaurant, Niagara Towers, Niagara Falls Family Court, Niagara Falls Police Station, Niagara Falls Public Library (both locations), Rite Aid (7804 Buffalo Ave. & 4407 Military Rd.), Save-A-Lot, Spallino Towers, Supermarket Liquor, Tops (all locations), Tim Hortons (all locations), Wedge Liquors, Wrobel Towers, and 7-Eleven (Hyde Park, Pine and Niagara Falls Blvd.).

North Tonawanda: Bishop Gibbons, Broadway Hotel, Budwey’s Market, Carousel Park Apartments, City Hall, DMV, Kimek’s Tavern, Lou’s Diner, Platter’s Chocolates, Public Library, Olympia Restaurant, Tops, Roman Café & Save-A-Lot

Sanborn: Smokin Joes (gas station and store) & Tim Hortons

Wilson: Lakeside Market

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

Chris's Corner: Taxes, Fees and Public Safety Cont. from Cover

Chris Voccio City Council Chairman

I recently got a phone call from a lifelong city resident, a gentleman with a last name anyone who grew up in Niagara Falls would recognize.

He had recently had breakfast with his buddies and they were complaining about the new garbage fee. The caller asked me if the elected officials in the city understood how property taxes and the new garbage fee hurt citizens. He was quite upset.

I told the caller that, despite what has happened in the past, I believe the new City government— both the new administration and the new Council — are in agreement that we can no longer go back to the taxpayers for the heavy lifting, that it's time we run government more efficiently instead of raising taxes or introducing new fees.

As I've said time and again, some of the public employee unions have had a powerful lock on city government in the past, which meant instead of reducing expenses City government would instead turn to the taxpayers. But elections matter, and I believe those days are over.

The new administration is working to create efficiencies by consolidating services with other government agencies. Think about this: Within the boundaries of our city, we have the Niagara Falls Housing Authority, the Niagara Falls School District, the Niagara Falls Water Board and, of course, City government. Each of these bodies has duplicated services, and that doesn't even consider possible coordination with County government or neighboring municipalities.

A close look at the City budget shows that almost all of our tax dollars go towards public employees (salaries, overtime, benefits, pensions, etc.) and the largest share of this goes to public safety. There has to be a balance between keeping people safe and running an efficient

government.

I refuse to believe that we have to tolerate a racket consisting of insane overtime expenses, padded pensions, Cadillac health insurance and union work rules designed to create inefficiency, or otherwise we are accused of not supporting public safety.

I know people complain about politicians, and that's understandable. But politicians in Niagara Falls make very little. The great majority of our tax dollars go to City employees, and the largest amount goes to fire and police. I'm sure you've all seen the long list of city employees who make far more than \$100,000, and that's not even counting the lavish health benefits and pensions. (If you've not seen the list I'm referring to, go to www.SeeThroughNY.net and you'll be shocked at what you can find.)

Of course, not all city employees, and not all fire and police employees, are taking advantage of the taxpayers. Most of our employees are working hard to keep us safe and keep our city running, earning a decent living. But some are clearly taking advantage of the racket.

Roads and sidewalks are crumbling, trees are falling and blight abounds, despite high taxes and fees, largely because half of the City budget is voraciously consumed by public safety departments with very strong unions.

We need to provide public safety services, but we simply can no longer be held hostage by a small number of powerful municipal unions. We can no longer allow them to force us to make the choice between being safe or facing never-ending tax increases.

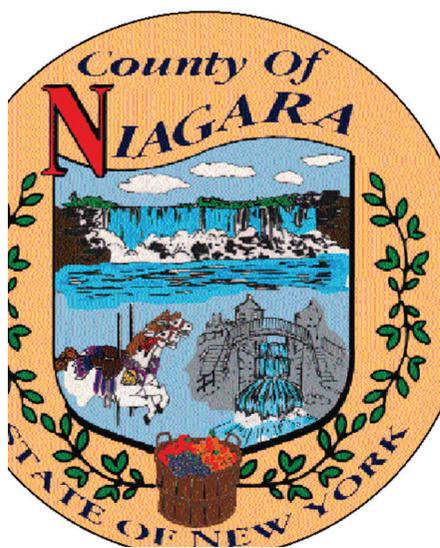
I believe we can do this. The end result needs to be a strong law enforcement presence without breaking the backs of taxpayers. We need to think creatively to preserve our primary mission of public safety while protecting taxpayers from the usual union scare tactics.

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

+ Weed, Theodore S	Niagara Falls	\$188,638	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Paonessa, Nicholas A	Niagara Falls	\$178,663	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Dal Porto, E Bryan	Niagara Falls	\$177,651	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Dallavia, Scott J	Niagara Falls	\$176,081	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Licata, Thomas J	Niagara Falls	\$170,330	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Lepine, Ronald D	Niagara Falls	\$167,034	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Freeman, Roger J	Niagara Falls	\$166,700	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Drake, Michael D	Niagara Falls	\$165,416	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Ligammari, Nicholas J	Niagara Falls	\$160,466	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Kok, David P	Niagara Falls	\$160,078	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Rizzo, Kelly J	Niagara Falls	\$159,925	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Fisher, Jay M, Jr	Niagara Falls	\$152,138	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Trane, Michael F.J.	Niagara Falls	\$151,229	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Lee, Michael J	Niagara Falls	\$150,757	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Cain, Carlton L	Niagara Falls	\$145,053	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Cirrito, Ronald J	Niagara Falls	\$141,314	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Corcoran, John M	Niagara Falls	\$141,050	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Conti, John S	Niagara Falls	\$138,663	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Catalano, Anthony D	Niagara Falls	\$137,785	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Schuster, Jon P	Niagara Falls	\$136,897	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Petrishin, John D	Niagara Falls	\$134,519	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Fontanella, Mark T	Niagara Falls	\$131,218	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Mayes, Clifford T, Jr	Niagara Falls	\$129,951	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Sykes, Jason G	Niagara Falls	\$129,440	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Fasciano, Sam P	Niagara Falls	\$129,341	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Carey, John J	Niagara Falls	\$127,148	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Colangelo, Thomas	Niagara Falls	\$126,711	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Stewart, Gordon G, Jr	Niagara Falls	\$126,020	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Ewing, Thomas G	Niagara Falls	\$125,587	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Jones, Daniel R	Niagara Falls	\$124,707	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ De Marco, Robert A	Niagara Falls	\$124,631	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Munn-Gadacz, Angela J	Niagara Falls	\$123,942	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Sweeney, Peter G	Niagara Falls	\$123,611	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Cudahy, David M	Niagara Falls	\$120,377	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Drinks-Bruder, Sanja R	Niagara Falls	\$120,235	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Mc Govern, David B	Niagara Falls	\$120,222	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Maluchnik, Kevin M	Niagara Falls	\$119,726	NYSLRS - Police & Fire
+ Tedesco, James F	Niagara Falls	\$118,170	NYSLRS - Police & Fire

These are the top salaries for the entire City of Niagara Falls during 2019 as seen on See-ThroughNY.

Niagara County Officials Push for Amazon Development



Staff Reporter

On Wednesday, August 12th, 2020, the Town of Grand Island was notified by TC Buffalo that they were withdrawing the application for Project Olive, which was the development sought by Amazon for a distribution center. The announcement by TC Buffalo means that the project as it pertains to developing in Erie County is all but dead.

Public officials in Niagara County quickly seized the opportunity.

Legislator Jesse Gooch, along with other County legislators and officials, believes that Amazon should explore Niagara County for potential development.

"We want Amazon to know that we are business-friendly in Niagara County," said Gooch, "and there are several areas in the county that I think could be a good fit."

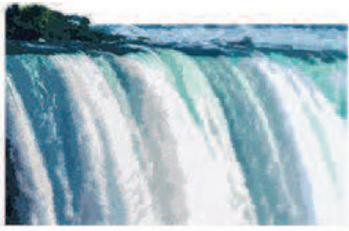
"As a Legislator I can assure you that

we in the county have reached out to Amazon and would love have the opportunity to show what our county has to offer," said Legislator Rich Andres. "In recent years major international companies like Yahoo, Bridgestone, Edwards Vacuum and more have found a home in business friendly Niagara County."

Amazon released a statement on Thursday, August 14th, 2020, stating in pertinent part, "we have decided not to pursue a location in Erie County at this time, although we continue to explore opportunities to invest and grow across the region and New York State."

Niagara Falls officials, such as Mayor Robert M. Restaino, have also publically stated their support for the company bringing their development to the Cataract City.

"I would love to see that in our community," said Restaino.



THE CRIME

WEEKLY HEADLINES

-On August 3, 2020 Niagara Falls Police Department was alerted of 2 felony warrants issued from the Pennsylvania State Police for 31-year-old Richard Reiss and 34-year-old Dewayne Shields. Warrant officers located a red compact 4-door sedan with Pennsylvania plates heading southbound on John B Daly Boulevard. The driver of the vehicle was identified as Reiss. Niagara Falls Officers attempted to initiate a traffic stop on the vehicle, but the car fled, heading east on Buffalo Avenue from John B Daly Blvd. NFPD discontinued their pursuit as NY State Police and other agencies took over as the car headed south onto Grand Island. State Police and other agencies continued to pursue the vehicle until it came to a stop on Niagara Street in Buffalo. This pursuit included the US Border Patrol via helicopter operated by the Air and Marine Operations. Marc Sledge, Director of the Air and Marine Operations for the Great Lakes Air and Marine branch commented, "This shows just how important our mission is both safeguarding the border and providing much needed support from the air to our law enforcement partners." The parties were taken into custody by the US Border Patrol in Buffalo without further incident before being turned over to the NFPD. "This is a great example of the excellent relationship the U.S. Border Patrol has with the state and local law enforcement." said Eduardo Payan, Chief Patrol Agent for the Buffalo Sector. "We will always work together to protect our country and communities". Reiss was booked at NFPD for vehicle and traffic charges resulting from this incident. PA State Police are expected to extradite both parties involved.

-Niagara Falls Police and Fire responded to the Hooker Docks off of 53rd Street and Buffalo Avenue on Thursday, August 6th, 2020, to rescue a man who heroically jumped into the Niagara River to save his dog after it fell into the Niagara River. Both the man and his dog survived.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the area of 68th and Lindbergh Avenue in the afternoon hours of Thursday, August 6th, after receiving a call of found property. According to reports, an individual found a wallet with credit cards scattered around it on the sidewalk. However, police quickly noticed that there were multiple different credit cards belonging to different individuals. One of which has an existing warrant out for his arrest. Police were not able to locate this individual who was looked at as a person of interest for taking the other credit cards. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 200 block of 83rd Street on August 6th, 2020, for found property. According to reports, police were called by a resident who stated that a purple Monster high h24" bicycle had been left for several days on the sidewalk leaning up against his fence. The bicycle was collected, tagged and placed in the basement storage area at the police station.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 600 block of 9th Street in the evening hours of Thursday, August 6th, 2020, after reports of a larceny. According to reports, the tenant reported that he blue garbage bin had been damaged in addition to the green recyclable tote missing. The complainant stated that she contacted City Hall regarding the issue and was told to make a report. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-In the afternoon hours of Thursday, August 6th, 2020, an individual came to police headquarters at 1925 Main Street to complain of suspicious activity on her Chrome account. According to the complainant, she went to Spectrum four to six weeks ago to get a new router and did this as she believed people were able to hack into her Chrome account through Google. She stated that since getting the new router, and changing all prior passwords, the activity started again despite being told by Spectrum to carry the router around with her wherever she went, which she does. However, she reported this did not matter as she reported it being hacked again.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Tops Friendly Markets on Portage Road in the evening hours of Thursday, August 6th, 2020, after reports of a theft. According to police, the suspect was observed placing numerous steaks and other merchandise into a bookbag. After being questioned by an employee about what was in the bag, the suspect ran out of the store and made away on a bike. The suspect is described as a white male, approx.. 33-34 years old, 5'8" - 5'10", with blue eyes. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 2200 block of LaSalle Avenue in the early morning hours of Friday, August 7th, 2020, after reports of criminal mischief. According to reports, the victim was notified by a neighbor of noise outside. Upon going out to his car, the victim noticed that that his vehicle, a 2016 Nissan Altima, was badly damaged including the passenger side and back window smashed, all four tires slashed, and white lines spray painted all over the vehicle. However, nothing was taken from the vehicle. Police estimated the cost of all damage at over \$2,000.00 and are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 600 block of 37th Street in the morning hours of Friday, August 7th, 2020, after reports of a criminal mischief. According to reports, an individual's car was vandalized overnight. The damage included a cracked front bumper that was hanging off, one of the side mirrors had been busted, and it appeared the entire vehicle was keyed all around. The victim also believes that someone side swiped the car. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Family Dollar on Hyde Park Blvd. in the evening hours of Friday, August 7th, 2020, after reports of a theft. According to the store manager, two individuals in the store were placing several items inside a purse that the woman was carrying. When trying to leave the store both individuals were approached and asked to see the contents of the purse but the couple refused. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Walmart in the evening hours of Friday, August 7th, 2020, after reports of a shoplifter in custody. According to police, the suspect was seen collecting at least 15 items and then at the checkout line was seen switching UPC codes for the food items with lesser value food items which decreased the price. The suspect then concealed the other items into Walmart shopping bags where she failed to pay for them. The suspect then passed all points of entry with an estimated value of



items stolen at \$87.06.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 500 block of 5th Street in the late evening hours of Saturday, August 8th, after reports of a burglary. According to reports, a 32-inch tv, dvd player, and about a dozen dvd's were stolen. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 600 block of 9th Street in the late afternoon hours of Saturday, August 8th, 2020, after reports of a burglary. According to reports, a 32-inch tv was replaced with a larger flat screen tv that did not have a power cord. Police are continuing to investigate this incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 2500 block of Welch Avenue in the early morning hours of Sunday, August 9th, 2020, after reports of an armed burglary. According to police, the victim was robbed at gunpoint. The victim further stated that she was asleep in the living room when her door opened and two black males pointed a handgun at her and demanded any money. The victim told police that she told the individuals that she was a "broke ass bitch" at which point the burglars demanded her phone. The suspects made away with various items before the victim called the police.

-In the early morning hours of Sunday, August 9th, 2020, Niagara Falls Police responded to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center after reports that an individual had just walked into the emergency room with a gunshot wound to the shoulder. Upon arriving at the scene, the officers spoke with the injured party who stated that there was a party at his residence on Grove Avenue and it was during this party that he was shot. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Niagara Falls Memorial medical Center in the early morning hours of Sunday, August 9th, 2020, after reports that a man had been stabbed at the Enjoy Motel on Niagara Falls Boulevard. Upon arriving, the police were informed that an unknown black male, approx.. 6' tall and 220 pounds, knocked on their room. When the couple answered the door, the individual pushed his way inside and slapped the female in the face. It was at this time the male victim jumped out of bed and was shortly thereafter stabbed by the aggressor. The male victim was stabbed twice on the left side of his body. Police then responded to a second incident at the same motel that could be related. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 7300 block of Buffalo Avenue in the morning hours of Monday, August 10th, 2020, after reports of a larceny. According to reports, a neighbor had witnessed another person's Amazon package being stolen. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 6600 block of Niagara Falls Blvd. in the evening hours of Monday, August 10th, 2020, after reports of a road rage incident. According to reports, the complainant stated that she was being followed by another vehicle who then started to yell and scream at her. Police found the individual who was following the complainant and she stated that she had a property dispute with her. After allowing both parties to leave, police then observed the suspect drive recklessly and attempting to hit the complainants car. The suspect was arrested.

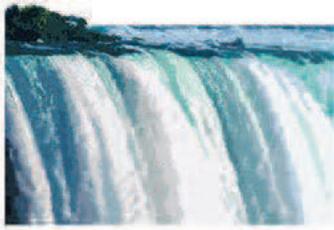
-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 800 block of Pine Avenue in the afternoon hours of Tuesday, August 11th, 2020, after reports of a larceny. According to reports, an individual's GT bike was stolen from outside his home. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Rainbow Bridge in the afternoon hours of Tuesday, August 11th, 2020, after reports that a female was detained with a loaded firearm. The suspect said she was unaware that there was a loaded firearm in the vehicle. The woman was placed under arrested and transported to Niagara Falls Police Department.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 7-Eleven on the 2300 block of Hyde Park Blvd. in the early morning hours of Wednesday, August 12th, 2020, after reports of a dog bite. According to police, an individual was attacked by a black dog that appeared to be a bulldog. The victim stated that the dog ran out of a nearby home. The victim was taken to EMMC for treatment.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 3000 block of Ontario Avenue in the morning hours of Wednesday, August 12th, 2020, after reports of a larceny. According to reports, the homeowner said that he put out his blue bin for the trash on Monday evening and never received it back on Tuesday. Police are continuing to investigate to see where the man's garbage tote is.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the area of 18th and Niagara Street in the evening hours of Thursday, August 13th, 2020, for a welfare check. Upon arriving at the scene, more information was obtained that a male had suffered a gunshot wound and was lying on the sidewalk. The police then met the victim at the hospital who stated that he was walking down 18th Street towards Niagara Street when he was approached by three males he did not know. One of them shot at him. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.



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Covid Cancels Summerfest at the Sal but Firefighters Offer Super Cruise for Sunday for Toy Fund

SUMMERFEST SUPERCRUISE

SUNDAY AUGUST 23, 2020 TO BENEFIT NIAGARA FALLS FIREFIGHTERS TOY FUND

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the immensely popular 'Summerfest at the Sal' has been cancelled.

This fundraising event staged by the Niagara Falls Fire Department helps raise money for their Toy Fund (NFFDTF) which provides not only toys at Christmas for children but warm winter clothing, hot meals and help for families in need.

So since large social gatherings are out of the question for now, instead of having their 'Summerfest at the Sal', there will be a 'Supercruise'.

It is in partnership with WNY HotRods Customs and Classics to help raise money for the toy fund.

Come in your cars and motorcycles on

Sunday, August 23rd to the parking lot next to the ball diamonds at Reservoir Park off of Witmer Road.

Participants are asked to arrive at 1pm to line up.

The cruise will start at 2pm and is expected to last one hour. The cruise will travel through Fort Niagara and Olcott so it will make an excellent summer Sunday drive and for a good cause.

All participants will be asked to stay in their vehicles. Volunteers will go car to car for donations and a 50/50 drawing.

"Now more than ever the Fire Department's Toy Fund is in dire need for our help," said City Councilman Ken Tompkins.

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COUPONS CANNOT BE COMBINED

Maziarz Cont. from Cover



Former State Senator George Maziarz now works for a company he once criticized for their role in the courthouse scandal.

tremendous influence on behalf of our community. He may have once indeed wielded great influence but few know how often he used that against the wishes of the community.

For example, drive across Niagara County and you will see signs opposed to industrial wind and solar projects that will destroy thousands of acres of farmland on dubious energy projects to send power downstate.

This was made possible by a piece of legislation called Article 10 that essentially took away any local control over these projects and gave it to Albany bureaucrats. These faceless political hacks can and have approved projects even though 90 percent or more of a community may be opposed.

Go ask rural towns in Niagara

County about Article 10 and you'll get an earful of four letter words.

What no one seems to remember is that the Article 10 legislation was written by none other than George Maziarz. And in return for sponsoring this terrible legislation, energy companies feted Maziarz with huge fundraisers that helped him build a million-dollar campaign account that he uses as a slush fund.

It's ironic that Maziarz talks about running for Newfane Town Supervisor as Newfane is one of the communities totally screwed by the Maziarz legislation. Maybe he hopes people will forget that he sold them out for big dollar donations and maybe they would, if he hadn't done it over and over.

Maziarz used to take campaign dollars from CWM Chemical Services in Lewiston but when he realized supporting the hazardous waste company was becoming a political liability he stopped.

But he was always helping CWM behind closed doors, like trying to force Niagara County, for paying for an attorney to oppose the expansion. Again, Maziarz screwing his constituents.

Now, you may ask why did Maziarz keep helping CWM if he wasn't taking contributions? Because when Maziarz left office under a cloud of suspicion, CWM was there with a cushy lobbying gig to put some dollars right in Maziarz pocket. Apparently, George's loyalty to his former constituents was less important than making bank.

Last week, residents of Pendleton got bad news that their fight against National Fuel building a highly opposed pump station right near a residential neighborhood has been lost. Again, a



Stay tuned for the Reporter's upcoming investigative series, "Coscia and the Three Little Councilmen." It is the shocking story of how Gary Coscia of Largo Capital got the NF City Council to award him a \$27.5 million courthouse project, in which he was to invest private money and how he covertly turned it into a \$50 million project, without a dime of his own money. And how three council members fought Mayor Vince Anello, who was trying to stop Coscia from fleeing the city.

You will walk away asking how Coscia was allowed to stick taxpayers with a \$50 million price tag for a courthouse that was designed and signed to be built for \$27.5 million. And you will wonder how Coscia, an FBI informant, was able to seemingly carpetbag millions off the public without criminal charges. Coming soon.

community gets no say on their own future.

Well, guess who lobbied for National Fuel? Yet again, George Maziarz sold out a group of people who backed him for years.

Many people used to think Maziarz never cared about money. Other politicians looked for ways to monetize their office but not George. Well, now we know he was the worst one, sticking the knife in the back of Niagara County again and again.

This common theme explains how Maziarz could take a job with the notorious Gary Coscia at Largo.

As the Reporter wrote last week,

Maziarz used to complain how Largo fleeced Niagara Falls on the courthouse project. Now Maziarz sings a different tune, when he sings for his supper with a cushy gig on Coscia's payroll.

Apparently, even Maziarz moral outrage can be silenced for the right price.

There used to be talk of naming things in honor of Maziarz when he retired. As more people become aware how he sold them out, he'll be lucky if he's not run out of town.

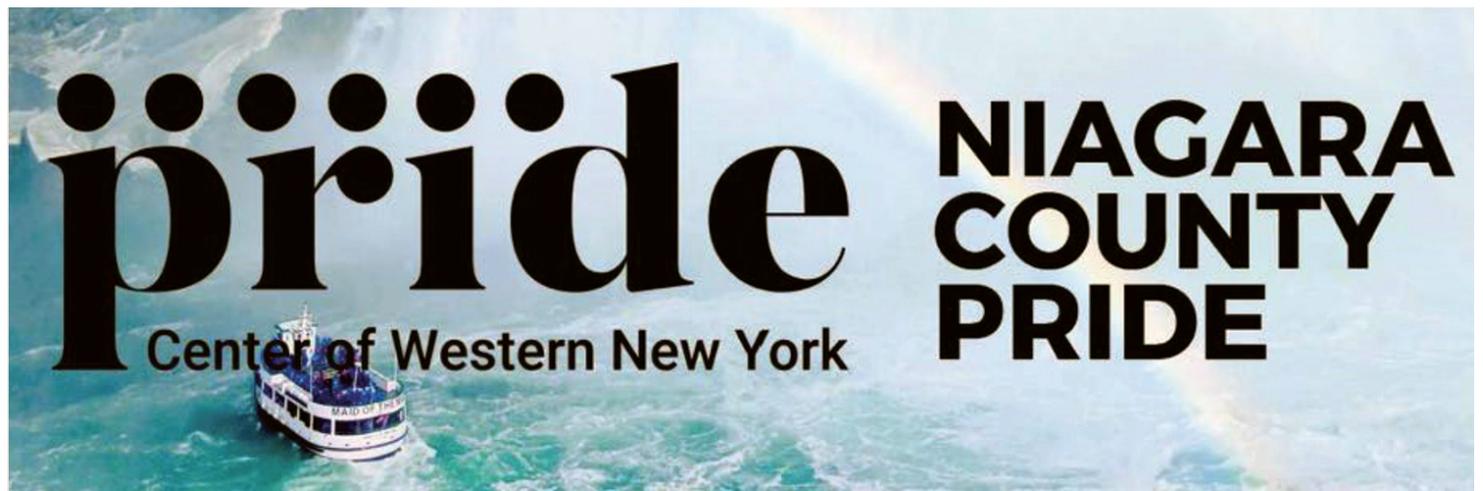
Lucky for him, Coscia has multiple offices across the United States where Maziarz can go hide.

Niagara County LGBTQ Group Hold School Supplies Drive

Staff Reporter

For the next two weeks, Niagara County Pride - a program of The Pride Center of WNY - will be collecting backpacks and other school supplies to help kids in need this year. The group's goal is to collect 50 backpacks filled with supplies to be able to give to local children.

According to Ronald Piaseczny, Niagara County Pride's Group Leader, "2020 has been a very challenging year for many families and children. There are a lot of families in WNY who are financially struggling as a result of the COVID pandemic or other factors. We recognize that the school year is going to look a lot different, with more virtual instruction, social distancing, and other safety precautions in place. We hope that by being able to provide school supplies to kids this year, we are able to take some burden off those families who might not be able to



afford to buy all the supplies their children need."

Donation drop off locations and times are as follows:

Sunday, August 23, 2020 from 10am to 12pm at Hyde Park in Niagara Falls, NY near the Veterans Memorial. Please look for the rainbow Pride flag and our banner at the donation drop off table.

Sunday, August 30, 2020 from 10am to 12pm on Canal Street in Lockport, NY next to Lake Effect Ice Cream. Please look for the rainbow Pride flag and our banner

at the donation drop off table.

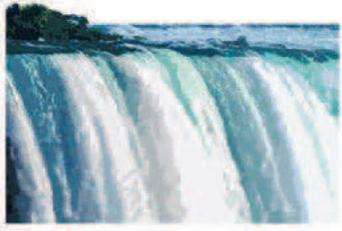
Over the past several years, Niagara County Pride has served as the only LGBTQ+ social organization for all of Niagara County, NY.

Piaseczny said. "We have hosted several successful and free events which have been open to all LGBTQ and ally community members in WNY, including a mass wedding ceremony in Niagara Falls State Park and Pride Street Festival (June 2019), an annual Pride Summer Picnic, an annual

all-inclusive Thanksgiving dinner.

"Our monthly meetings have served as an important community resource for individuals to be able to have a safe space and accepting place to meet one another, share our stories, and build lasting connections. Currently, we are holding virtual online meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of every month."

For more information on meetings or to donate, contact Piaseczny via email at niagarapride@gmail.com.



NORTH TONAWANDA

City Accountant: NT Finances in Good Shape, But You Would Not Know it from Highly Politicized State Audit



By: Jeffrey Zellner
North Tonawanda Accountant

I am new to my position as accountant for the City of North Tonawanda.

In fact I was on the job for only about a month at the end of the New York State audit process, one which had been ongoing for over seven months.

When I read the State audit in draft form I became initially quite nervous.

As the City's accountant, I understand it is my responsibility to provide the mayor and the council with timely and accurate data and an accurate picture of the city's finances.

This clearly was not happening during the period prior to my taking office and I am not going to rehash the absence of the city's only accountant for much of 2019.

However I can address the financial concerns today and address some of the findings in the state audit:

Does NT have a "Balanced Budget"? Yes It Does!

Money coming in = money going out. That means NT has a balanced budget.

The term "structurally unbalanced" means simply that one time revenue sources will not be available the next year

NT has a balanced budget. We do need require replacing funds that are not recurring. This happens in nearly every municipality and NT is no different.

Is the city at risk of running out of money?

No immediate concern of city running out of money

I am concerned that the state funding we should receive may be held up and that could be a problem if it is delayed

Balance in the General Fund is projected to last until next year's tax payments are due in April. The City has borrowed from the Water Fund to guarantee payrolls in the early part of the year before taxes are due. This practice is criticized in the audit. However, all five council members voted in favor of it several years in a row. It is not improper according to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. It was done as an effort to save interest on what they call a tax anticipation note, which municipalities can take out in tight periods. Whether or not it is good practice is up to the beholder, but it did save interest payments and application fees.

Did we deplete the fund balance to unsafe levels?

Fund balance is the monies not used in previous years that ends up in a savings account and used for unanticipated expenditures

The 2020 budget does not use any of the fund balance although it was used in previous years to avoid increasing taxes.

State Comptroller Thomas Dinapoli's office has cited communities for having too much in their fund balance and has recommendations on how low a fund balance can go

As the accountant, I would like to see our fund balance grow to make my job easier

Was the 2020 Budget prepared correctly?

I was a little concerned that the 2020 budget, which had to be prepared without any help from the previous accountant, would be off

Budget projections for 2020 were spot on if

not a little conservative

COVID will and has changed this and will have an impact going forward.

In the 1st quarter our sales tax figures were higher than the projections, in fact we were \$49,000 dollars higher than anticipated despite the state officials saying we overestimated

I was very surprised to find that despite one of the audit's key findings saying sales tax projections were overstated, we are exactly where they were projected to be even with COVID. As well as with our real property taxes coming in under 1% different from projections.

Was there wrongdoing or malfeasance alleged in this audit?

No wrongdoing is alleged

All monies are accounted for and the numbers balance

What are the recommendations from Comptroller Dinapoli's office?

NYS proposed solution is to raise taxes and/or cut services.

What was the budgeting philosophy during the period in question?

I spoke with the aldermen and the intent of the aldermen was to raise taxes as a last resort and to do more with less while maintaining a balanced budget. NT has raised taxes far less than neighboring municipalities over the past decade,

Keep water rates low: NT has not touched water and sewer rates for 10 years

What is the Current condition of the City?

Housing prices are going up tremendously

The real estate market is very healthy

We have seen lots of business growth over the past several years

What do we do going forward?

To be clear, Tax rates cannot be changed mid-year.

As directed by the council and mayor, I am currently preparing a budget for 2021 using new software that incorporates the latest industry standards for budgeting and spending.

We are working with the department heads and the city officials to develop five year rolling projections to ensure we are responsible going forward

I would like to see a few structural things addressed as it relates to the accountants role and responsibilities. I think much of this confusion stems from the lack of an accountant especially in the midst of a routine, but lengthy state audit

During the nearly 7 month long audit, the previous accountant was not in city hall for most of this period and was not available to the auditors. I feel this hindered the auditing process.

This has been my first experience with state auditors as the City Accountant, and although I was hired near the tail end of the audit, I found them to be highly unprofessional. The state auditors were condescending and gave suggestions that they later claimed they did not endorse. Many of the suggestions were not based on accepted accounting practices (GASB) but were merely the opinions of the bureaucrats.



Zellner credits Mayor Pappas and Common Council for holding the line and not raising taxes during years covered by audit.



Registered Apprenticeship

The US and New York State Departments of Labor recognize and monitor registered skilled apprenticeship programs in NYS and throughout the United States. The Laborers' International Union of North America publicly promotes our successful model of labor-management registered apprenticeship programs to combat the growing emphasis on employer programs supported by taxpayers.

What is Registered Apprenticeship?

It's a job. Apprentices start working from day one with incremental wage increases as they become more proficient.

It's on-the-job learning and education. Registered Apprenticeship includes on-the-job learning from an assigned mentor combined with technical training provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and institutions employing distance and computer-based learning systems.

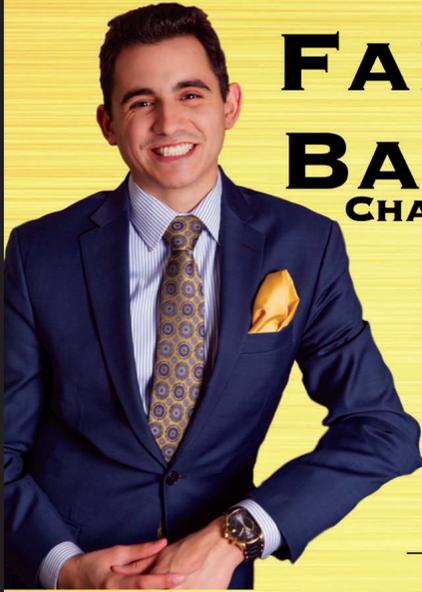
It's a credential. At the end of the apprenticeship, all apprentices receive a nationally recognized credential. Some apprenticeship programs offer interim credentials as apprentices achieve important milestones during their apprenticeship.

What are some advantages of Registered Apprenticeship?

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

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

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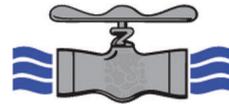
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