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Celeste Friend

Councilperson for Utica's Third Ward
celeste4utica@gmail.com 315-725-5987

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THE NEWSLETTER IS BACK!

Over the summer, I allowed myself a little Newsletter break - but I've been busy in the Ward, and although summer was great and productive, it is definitely that time of year when I welcome the return of a more regular, structured schedule. So welcome back to the Newsletter! (And, if you like hearing from me once a month, and you think others would as well, please forward this email to them and ask them to sign up to get it themselves.)

NEW STREET LIGHTS ARE UP THROUGHOUT SOUTH UTICA

At one of our first meetings of the current Council, we voted to move forward with a bond that would allow us to replace the streetlights throughout Utica with new LED lights. This is saving us money in two important ways: we now own the equipment itself, so we are no longer paying to lease it monthly from National Grid, and the lights are very efficient, so we are saving money every month on the City's electric bill. I was happy to vote Yes to authorize this bond, and so I was very pleased to see the new lights going up throughout South Utica this summer.

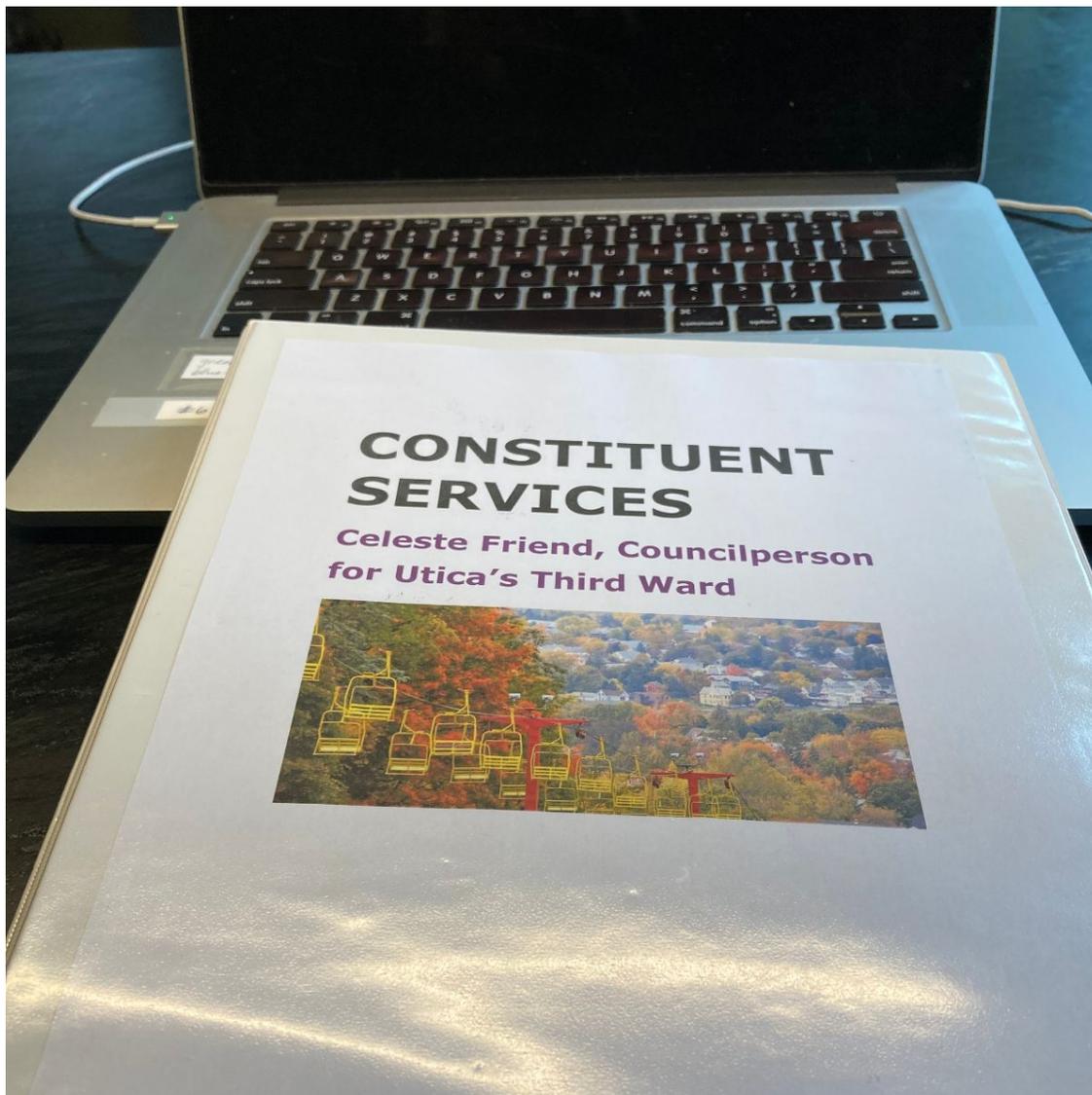


CONSTITUENT HOURS RESTART SEPTEMBER 15th

Although we still need to wear a mask when around others, and practice social distancing, things are easing up, and we are freer to get together. My Constituent Hours will resume beginning on Tuesday, September 15th, from 4-6pm, at The Other Side at 2011 Genesee Street, right next to Cafe Domenico. I will hold Constituent Hours the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Tuesday of every month. Drop in!

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

The Summer of 2020 was, of course, the Pandemic Summer, and for me personally, it was the Gardening Summer, but it was also most certainly, the Summer of Constituent Services. I fielded lots of request for a wide variety of issues, and I learned how many City services worked, who to call, how to get things done, and so on. The staff at Congressman Brindisi's office was very helpful in giving me advice on how to organize both these requests as they came in and my follow up (hence the three-ring binder pictured below). This Summer, we got some road lines repainted, filled a bunch of potholes, got speed limits signs, stop signs, a Deaf Child sign placed. We had the fence on Brookline that had been knocked down by last year's Halloween floods replaced (this time with a gate). There was lots to be done, and I worked with the City to get lots of it done. If you have a problem that you need addressed, here is how to reach out: Text me at 315-725-5987, Call me at the same number, Email me at Celeste4utica@gmail.com, or send me a message on Facebook. (This last way is my least favorite as I don't always see those messages right away.) And, by all means, if I don't get back to you in a timely manner, try, try again.



EVERY VOTE COUNTS

We are less than two months out from November's General Election. There are three ways that you can vote this year:

- 1) You can vote by requesting an Absentee Ballot. If you are concerned about voting in person because of the Pandemic, you can request an Absentee Ballot on the basis of "temporary illness". You can apply for a an Absentee Ballot now. Those Ballots will begin to be mailed out in just a few days. [Follow this link for an application for an Absentee Ballot.](#) Once you receive your ballot, fill it in, sign , and return to the BOE.
- 2) You can vote during the Early Voting period, which this year will run from Saturday, October 24th until Sunday, November 1st. Keep an eye out for a video that I am producing to explain all the details of Early Voting. Early Voting is a great way to vote in person safely, without worrying about being around crowds of people.
- 3) You can vote in person on Tuesday, November 3rd at your regular polling place. Anyone who is a citizen and has resided at their current address for at least 30 days is eligible to vote. [You can learn more here about how to register to vote.](#)

[Follow me on Facebook, where we have posted all sorts of helpful details about all of the above.](#)

CALLING ALL SOUTH UTICA GARDENERS!

There are many terrific gardens and gardeners in South Utica. Gardens can do a lot to beautify our neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for all of us. I will be holding a meeting of people who would be interested in organizing a South Utica Garden club. Email me if you would be interested in this.



MAKE SURE TO BE COUNTED!

The Census is very important - it is the way we can make sure that our state and our region gets what it deserves, both in terms of representation and resources. So far, 85% of New Yorkers have been counted, and the Census will continue until the end of September.

[To fill out the Census online, just go here. It couldn't be much easier!](#)

MY VOTES ON THE COUNCIL

June 17, 2020

In response to a Constituent's request, I asked the Police Department to study the parking legislation for Symonds Place. There were NO PARKING signs on the South side of the street before it was rebuilt last year, and they were never reinstalled. The Police Department did their due diligence and discovered that the prior signs had never been properly legislated. Therefore, I sponsored and voted AYE for an Ordinance to make the South Side of Symonds Place in the Third Ward NO PARKING.

I voted AYE to place into Committee my own legislation that would require that certain police personnel records be placed on the City website. I had submitted this legislation the previous week. Soon thereafter, the Mayor and Police Chief Williams announced that they would be doing exactly as my legislation suggested, so the Council deemed it appropriate to place my legislation in Committee.

The "Thursday Rule": On June 17th, I introduced legislation to change our Rules of Order. In the past, there has been something nicknamed the "Thursday Rule", which required that legislation introduced to the Council had to be submitted at least 5 days prior to the meeting at which it was being first introduced. When the current Council adopted its Rules of Order, which every new Council does, we voted to exempt from this rule so many government departments that it became an empty rule. As a result, legislation was being given to us at the last hour (in one instance, it literally came to us at 6pm for a 7pm meeting.) This put the Council in a very difficult position, where we were being asked to vote on legislation that we could not properly vet or carefully consider. I therefore introduced a new, stricter version of the "Thursday Rule", which re-instituted the requirement that all legislation, including that introduced by the Council itself, in a timely fashion. I voted for this legislation, obviously. It passed 8-1, with only Councilperson Mark Williamson voting against it.

I voted AYE on a Resolution to approve a traffic ticket diversion program between Oneida County and the City of Utica. I voted AYE to make Alma Mujanic a Commissioner of Deeds in the City of Utica. I voted AYE for an Engineering Planning Grant Agreement. I voted AYE to change the Summer Common Council meetings to July 15 and August 12. I voted AYE that a section of the City Code regarding Heavy trucks on the Parkway be rescinded and that the Code be amended in a different manner. I voted AYE to place in Committee the appointment of a Representative to the Towing Licensing Commission. I voted AYE to place in Committee a Resolution regarding the NYS repeal of 50a of the Civil Rights Law. I voted AYE on a Resolution to honor our Essential Workers in the City. I voted AYE to place into Committee a number of appointments to the new Youth Council. I voted AYE for some new STOP signs in the vicinity of Leland and Wurz Avenues. I voted AYE for a Resolution commending the NYS Legislature for repealing 50a of the Civil Rights Law. I voted AYE to place into committee legislation that I brought to guarantee that neighborhoods would receive adequate notification about large developments. I will return to this legislation as the Council works its way through the new Zoning

Ordinance. And finally, on July 17th, I voted AYE to amend the City ordinance regarding towing. This legislation was carefully considered and amended by the Council before we passed it.

July 15, 2020

In response to Constituents' requests, I asked the Police Department to study the traffic safety at the intersection of Holland and Prospect. The Department concluded that STOP signs on Holland Ave would slow down traffic, thereby making it safer. I thereby sponsored and voted AYE to to add stop signs at Holland and Prospect to make it into a four-way stop.

I voted AYE to place a stop sign on Brayton Place, to add three NO PARKING AT ALL TIMES signs to Brayton Place, and to appoint Mike Mahoney to the Towing Rotation Licensing Commission. I voted AYE to placing in Committee a Resolution to create a quiet zone along the train tracks along the northern border of Utica. I voted AYE to make the Common Council the lead agency in a SEQR Coordinated Environmental Review in relation to the new Zoning ordinance. I voted AYE to place the New Zoning Ordinance in committee. (This is an important piece of legislation, and I will be reporting on this in much more detail in the near future.) I voted AYE to appoint six members to the newly re-formed Utica Youth Council. I voted AYE to allow the Mayor to extend the Intermunicipal agreement to establish the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank, and to appoint Councilperson Robert Burmaster to the Land Bank. I voted to Ordain the transfer of funds between different budget lines for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. I voted to adjust the Solid Waste Service Charge for 2020-2021. And finally, I voted AYE to grant to MVHS easements which will allow them to build a pedestrian bridge.

August 12, 2020

I voted AYE for an Ordinance that would prohibit the specific noises produced by fireworks and for an Ordinance to allow UMHA to erect an 8 foot fence on Seymour Ave. I voted AYE for a Resolution requesting that ARC Oneida-Lewis funding be preserved by the State of New York. I voted AYE for five Ordinances allowing for the transfer of funds between budget lines for the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. I sponsored and voted AYE for a Resolution calling for Hazard pay for Essential Workers. I voted to place in Committee an Ordinance to rename a section of Hobart Street "Essential Workers Way". I voted AYE for a Resolution to share services with the NYS DoT and for a Intermunicipal agreement with BOCES for certain automotive repair services. I voted AYE to authorize the sale of surplus City equipment and to renew an intermunicipal agreement for shared police services between the City and New Hartford. I voted for a Public Hearing on the matter of discontinuing a portion of Burrstone Road and selling it to Utica College. I voted AYE for an Ordinance to establish a Liability Reserve Fund for Employee Benefits.

I will report on my September votes in my October Newsletter.

UPCOMING NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 1st

My next newsletter will be sent on October 1st. In that Newsletter, in addition to reporting on all my votes taken in September, I will discuss progress made by both the City and the Sauquoit Creek Basin Intermunicipal Commission to address the problems of flooding in South Utica. (And stay tuned for a community meeting on flooding later in October.) I will also discuss the new Zoning Ordinance that is currently before the Council, and the current state of affairs with the New Forest Cemetery. I will also remind everyone of the City's policies regarding green waste, and why complying with those policies is in the interest of all of us.

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