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COVID-19 RAGES ON

As you are surely aware, Covid-19 is only getting worse and worse here in the Mohawk Valley, and in particular in Oneida County. You can track how Covid-19 is affecting us here at the Oneida County Covid-19 dashboard, [by just clicking here](#).

So, it is long since time for all of us to buckle down and follow ALL the rules. The lives of our neighbors, and especially of healthcare workers, are literally depending on all of us being willing to do what we need to do to protect each other. So mask up anytime that you are with people other than members of your own household, avoid large gatherings, wash your hands frequently, and stay home as much as you can.

If you missed my recent Newsletter explaining the new vaccines that are on their way, and why I hope that everyone who can get one will get one, [just click here](#).



THE ZBA AND SUNSET AVE CONVENIENCE STORE

On Sunset, near the intersection of Arnold Ave, there are a few commercial buildings. One of them has been vacant for quite a while, having most recently

housed a small travel agency. A man applied for a special permit from Urban and Economic Development to open a convenience store in that location. Neighbors were notified of a special public hearing before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on December 15th. These convenience stores often create problems when they are located in residential neighborhoods, and so I decided it would be best for all of us for this application to be denied. I canvassed the neighbors and talked to several people who live near the site of the proposed store. I went to the ZBA hearing (online of course) and spoke out against the permit. Several of the neighbors and neighboring business owners did as well. We made good arguments, and the ZBA was convinced. The permit was denied and that area of Sunset will remain quiet and clean.

### SNIFE SIGNS AROUND TOWN

You have probably seen them around South Utica - commercial signs, sometimes handmade and sometimes printed up, in the city right of way along the street, or attached to telephone poles. The signs that we have seen lots of in the past year feature a phone number if you want to sell your house for cash fast. The signs are a problem for at least three reasons: they contribute to what we could call "sign pollution" and simply make the city less attractive; they violate City codes; and especially in the case of these signs offering to buy up houses quickly, they are almost certainly preying on more vulnerable members of our community. So, in short - take them down whenever you see them! They are called "snipe signs" and they violate City laws. Feel more than free to remove them, and if you don't want to have to dispose of them yourselves, then I'm happy to have you put them on my porch at 37 Emerson Ave. Many thanks to Mark Thompson on Sunset Ave, who is really vigilant about this problem, and who always lets me know when he starts to see them popping up again. And thanks to my brother who, while visiting, was more than happy to pull down any signs I pointed out to him - he's the tall fellow in the photo on the left.



## CONSTITUENT HOURS FIRST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

I will continue to hold my regular Constituent Hours on the 1st Tuesday of every month from 4-6pm at The Other Side at 2011 Genesee Street, right next to Cafe Domenico. Please come with a mask and plan to practice social distancing. As always, I am happy to take your texts or phone calls at 315-725-5987 or your emails at celeste4utica@gmail.com. I work on Constituent Services 7 days a week, so reach out anytime. My first Constituent Hours of 2021 will be on Tuesday, January 5th.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

This is my first Newsletter of this New Year. In 2021, I am aiming for a total of 12 regular Newsletters. I am also going to start sending an additional email, in about the middle of each month, to make a series I'm going to call "Utica: Know Your Government". It will explain one particular aspect of our local government and how we do what we do. Is there some aspect of local government you've always wanted to know more about? Let me know!

January affords me extra time, and especially this year, as my Spring semester doesn't begin until February. So I am also planning on working on a Legislative Year in Review for 2020. And I am hoping to produce a short video describing what we accomplished in the outgoing year. So, many things to look forward to.

## SPOTLIGHT ON A LOCAL BUSINESS!

One of the truly wonderful things about Utica is its variety of great restaurants. Covid-19 has hit these businesses especially hard. So for the next few Newsletters at least, our Local Business feature is going to shine a light on places in South Utica where you can get take-out. Keep your business in your community and keep your community in business!

Bone Yard BBQ

244 Roosevelt Drive, Utica, NY 13502

315-733-0364

[www.boneyardbbqcny.com](http://www.boneyardbbqcny.com)

FB. Boneyard BBQ

Owner: Craig Manderson

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 11am- 9pm, Sunday 11am- 6pm, Monday Closed

Bone Yard BBQ, opened in 2016, is a full menu BBQ restaurant and catering business with a full bar. Bone Yard was recently highlighted on Food Network TV. Because they smoke every day, it is easy to find. Just follow the smell of the smoker.

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## MY VOTES ON THE COUNCIL

December 2, 2020

I voted NAY to lay on the table a Local Law that is an alternative to my legislation that would return term limits to 8 years for every elected official in Utica, as mandated by a majority of voters in 1992. This Local Law, sponsored by Councilmembers Meola, Burmaster, McNeil, LoMedico, and DiBrango, was carefully constructed so as to allow some elected officials to serve 12 years. I voted AYE to place in committee an Ordinance, sponsored by Councilmember Moody, requiring video surveillance on certain apartment buildings.

December 16, 2020

I voted AYE for transfers of funds to adjust for an unexpected use of the City's sidewalk program and to adjust for unexpected unemployment costs due to Covid-19. I voted AYE to appoint four members of the Common Council and Thomas Allard as Commissioner of Deeds in the City of Utica. I voted AYE for a Proclamation to Honor Frank Shackelford. I voted AYE to place in Committee an Ordinance to amend the City Code for FOIL requests, to charge modest copying fees for FOIL requests when copying is required.

I, along with Delvin Moody, Joe Betrus, and Mark Williamson, voted NAY for a Local Law that allows some elected officials to serve for 12 years, while nonetheless returning term limits to 8 years for others. This was a Term Limit law that was introduced as an alternative to the one that I had introduced in November that would have returned term limits to the 8 years for EVERYONE. But their Law passed 5 votes to 4. So for now, the term limits as established by the voters in 1992 has been returned for some of Utica's elected officials, but not all.

Remember all meetings of the Council are live streamed on the [City's YouTube channel](#), and I encourage you to watch our meetings from home. And all of the legislation under consideration is [available online at this link](#).

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