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PAVING

It's that time of year - when the Department of Engineering gets ready to pave our roads. At our last Council meeting, on January 20th, an Ordinance was brought out for discussion which would, for the second year in a row, reduce the amount we spend on paving from \$5million to \$3million. There was much discussion, led most clearly by Councilman Betrus from North Utica, about how problematic it would be to once again not honor the clear desire of voters to spend \$5million a year on paving. In the end, the Ordinance was placed into committee. I expect that we will be voting on it this Wednesday. I will only vote for the Ordinance if we first amend it to return our spending to the full \$5million this year. (Be aware: the Council can Ordain that we should spend \$5million and we might nonetheless spend less simply because it turns out to be impossible to get that much paving done by October, after which time we cannot pave.) Keep an eye out for my next "How Utica Works" Newsletter, which will be all about paving.

PUBLIC COMMENT IS BACK

Two meetings ago, when it finally sank in that we would continue to meet remotely for the foreseeable future, I brought a Resolution to allow the public to call in to comment at our Council meetings. I am grateful to my colleagues for their support: the Resolution passed unanimously. It is easy to participate in Public Comment: simply email the Clerk no later than 3pm on the day of the Common Council meeting. (The next meeting is Wednesday, February 3rd.) She will place you on the list, and you will then get an email back with instructions on how to call in to the meeting. You can email the Clerk at cityclerk@cityofutica.com.

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](#).

COMMUNITY FRIDGE IN ONEIDA SQUARE

Times are tough, and many people in our community are hungry. And, yes, there are

ways for them to get food: food stamps and pantries, for example. But some young people in our community wanted to provide at least one more way for people to feed themselves and their families, so they started a "community fridge". The rules are pretty simple: take what you need and give what you can. Anyone is welcome to contribute food of any type, perishable and non-perishable. And anyone can take any food they need at any time. The fridge is located in front of the Oneida Square Market at 1331 Oneida Street. So if you have food to give to members of our community, please feel free to bring it to the Community Fridge.



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, February 2nd.

BUY NOTHING UTICA

Shulamis Ossowski, who operates Hodge House, a daycare on Oneida Street just south of Higby Road, has started a new group on Facebook. The group is called "Buy Nothing Utica (South), NY". The idea behind this group and project is pretty simple: buy less of what we need by finding it right within the community. Members of the group can ASK for things they need, and GIVE away things they don't need. (Think of parents sharing clothing their babies and children have outgrown and you get the idea.). You can ask for anything, and give anything: no judgments, no questions asked. You can ask to join the group by clicking on this link: [Buy Nothing Utica \(South\).](#)

NEW MID-MONTH NEWSLETTER

Beginning last month, I am now writing an extra newsletter, and aiming to send it out in about the middle of the month. I'm calling it "How Utica Works", and its aim is to explain one particular feature of our local government in detail. I am enjoying it because it gives me a good excuse to learn something new every month and to help you become more informed about how YOUR government goes about OUR business. My first "How Utica Works" was a big hit. I heard back from dozens of people about how helpful they found it. If you missed it the first time around, [YOU CAN READ IT HERE.](#)

I am looking forward to writing more of these Newsletters, and am currently working on one on an important topic for many of you: paving.

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!

Rintrona's Bistro

470 French Road, 315-864-8050

Hours: Wednesdays - Thursdays 4-10, Fridays 11:30 -10

Saturdays 12 -10, (closed Sunday-Tuesday)

Hours will change in Spring

FB: Rintrona's Bistro, Email: rintronasbistro470@gmail.com

Owner: Maria Rintrona

Dine in or take out

Rintrona's Bistro is one of the newest Italian restaurants and sports bars in South Utica, having opened in July 2020. The Bistro offers a set menu along with a daily special posted on the restaurant's Facebook page. The dining room is newly remodeled and spacious, with a large outdoor space open when the weather is warmer. Maria wants her patrons to feel at home. Her restaurant's motto is, "Rintrona's . . . a place your feet may leave, but your heart never does."



MY VOTES ON THE COUNCIL

January 6, 2021

I voted AYE on a number of Resolutions appointing several people as Commissioner of Deeds. (Being a Commissioner of Deeds allows people to collect petition signatures for ballot access on different party lines.) We passed these Resolutions for: Nadine Barroncini, Celeste Friend, Andy Zygmunt, Tim Julian, Delvin Moody, and Tracy Maycock. I voted AYE for a Resolution recognizing the recent heroism of Lieutenant Gerry Alsante, Firefighter Brian Hartnett, and Firefighter Brian Devins. I voted AYE to approve and endorse The Center's (formerly known as The Refugee Center) application for a grant that they depend on. I voted AYE to transfer funds from one budget line to another. I voted AYE to commit three Resolutions to appoint people to our Municipal Ethics Board. I voted to dispense with a piece of legislation I had placed into committee some months back, because I had decided it needed to be substantially rewritten. Most important, I voted AYE for my own Resolution to restore PUBLIC COMMENT during our virtual meetings. When the City went into a State of Emergency early last year, the Common Council suspended its Rules of Order. This meant that during our virtual meetings, we have not had the benefit of public comment. I did at one point over the Summer, while we were for a short while meeting in person, try to bring the public back into the meetings. But as City Hall is under the purview of the Mayor, others determined that there was no way for us to do so. We then went back to Virtual Meetings, as the Mohawk Valley's positivity rate

climbed. So I then decided that we could no longer wait for things to return to "normal" before we restored Public Comment. After much discussion about how this would work, I was very pleased that my colleagues voted unanimously to restore this important means of communication between the Council and the public. Anyone can now email the Clerk at cityclerk@cityofutica.com by 3pm on the day of the meeting and ask to be placed on a list for public comment.

January 20, 2021

I voted AYE to appoint 16 people as Commissioners of Deeds. (See explanation above. See our minutes for a full list of these people.) I voted AYE for an Ordinance to change parking hours on Bleeker Street. I voted to Commit a Resolution determining that paving our streets this year is a Type II action for purposes of SEQR Act. I voted AYE to commit an Ordinance that would allow the City to borrow \$500,000 for this year's paving. We discussed this at great length, with many members of the Council arguing that we should in fact borrow \$2.5 million, as required by the recent paving referendum. I have decided that we should borrow the full \$2.5 million, and I will not vote for an Ordinance that requires that we borrow less than that amount. I voted AYE to appoint Emilie Raymond to the Municipal Ethics Board. And finally I voted AYE to allow the Mayor to enter into a permit agreement with the NYS Depart of Transportation to create public parking lots on land owned by NYS.

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