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Celeste Friend

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Welcome to our second Newsletter. We will use this as a way to keep residents of South Utica informed on a variety of issues. First and foremost, we will announce all the places you can find Celeste, such as Constituent Hours, Council meetings, and so on. Celeste will explain each of her votes on the Council here every month. And this month we will be introducing a regular feature by our good friend Theresa Harden Smith: "Spotlight on Local Business". We hope that this Newsletter will help to keep South Utica a vibrant place in which to live and work, where you have a strong voice in your government and community.



REGULAR MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Meeting of the Common Council: Wednesday, February 5th & February 19th, 6pm for pre-meeting, 7pm for regular meeting, public welcome to both meetings

South Utica Neighborhood Association: Monday, February 10th, 6pm, Notre Dame Elementary School, 11 Barton Ave, just off Genesee Street
Constituent Hours: 1st, 2nd, 4th Tuesday of every month, The Other Side gallery, 2011 Genesee Street, February 4th, 11th, & 25th

Please note: Common Council Meets THIS Wednesday, February 5th. The pre-meeting conference is at 6pm and the regular meeting is at 7pm. BOTH meetings are open to the public. Please attend!

SPECIAL MEETINGS

Flooding Mitigation Efforts with Local Officials

Join Celeste and representatives from several local elected officials and offices as they explain their efforts to mitigate the harm of flooding: Tuesday, February 11th, 7-9pm, The Community Foundation, 2608 Genesee Street

Town Hall: Get Involved and Stay Engaged!

This will be Celeste's first Town Hall. She is looking forward to listening to her Constituents and learning what is most important to them. She will share her ideas for upcoming Legislation as well as report on what she has already achieved. Celeste will also introduce some ways that we can all be more engaged in the civic and political life of our community. Monday, February 24th, 7-9pm, Notre Dame Elementary School, 11 Barton Ave, Genesee Street

MY VOTES ON THE COMMON COUNCIL

There has been one meeting since the previous Newsletter. That meeting was on January 15th. Here are my votes there:

- 1) I voted NAY on waiving the reading of the minutes because there were no minutes to be read. I will continue to work with our new Clerk and the President to make sure that both members of the Common Council and the public are provided with complete and accurate minutes in a timely and accurate way. Minutes of meetings of all public bodies are required by NYS Open Meeting Law.
- 2) I voted AYE on selling four properties by the URA back to private individuals. These sales are of properties owned by the city to private owners. These properties are then placed back onto the tax rolls, which is good for everyone. I voted AYE on transferring funds between accounts. This vote was requested by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, which oversees the city budget throughout the fiscal year. I voted AYE to rescind limited parking on a section of Park Ave and AYE to replace it with No Parking. I voted AYE to appoint Stephanie Tighe as a Commissioner of Deeds in the City of Utica. I voted AYE to authorize the sale of old DPW equipment. I voted AYE to refund the Solid Waste Service Charge to the Armory, who pays for their own trash hauler. I voted AYE to authorize the city to spend \$570,000 to for the Utica Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. This will allow the City to participate in federal funding for this project. The City fully expects to be

reimbursed by federal grants for this expenditure.

3) I voted AYE to allow certain exceptions to the Thursday rule, which allow some City Hall departments to submit proposed legislation later than the Thursday preceding a regular meeting of the Common Council.

4) I voted AYE for new rules for Public Comment. I voted for the new rules because I am fundamentally committed to preserving public comment. However, I did qualify my vote as I had and continue to have grave misgivings about the new rules. The old rules were, in my view, inconsistent and unclear and they did not prohibit speakers from abusing the privilege of public comment. The new rules, however, are, in my view, even worse. Although they solve some of the problems in the old rules, they are far more restrictive in the content of what people can say. In particular, they prohibit speakers from being "disparaging" of anyone in public office or City Department Heads. I find this an unjustifiable infringement of speakers' rights. The rules are also flawed in being logically inconsistent and therefore unenforceable. I worry that if they are enforced as written, we may well be in violation of the First Amendment. I intend to continue to advocate for better rules to govern public comment.

5) I voted AYE to table a number of other resolutions, concerning the granting of an easement over Edward Street, and an easement for gas service at the Utica Zoo. I also voted AYE to table three resolutions dealing with the Rules for the Common Council.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

Flooding I continue to work on educating myself and my Constituents about flooding in our area. I am attending the Sauquoit Creek Basin Intermunicipal Commission every month so that I can keep track of the joint efforts that Utica is part of. I held an educational meeting on flooding on January 28th. We had about 20 people in the room, and we all learned a lot from local Civil Engineer, Margaret Reilly.

Vacant Properties I have been working to track down the ownership status of a number of vacant properties in South Utica. I have begun to work on legislation that I hope can provide an incentive to owners to sell or rent out their properties that are currently sitting empty.

Cleanup I am collecting addresses of places in South Utica where we want to clean up. I am planning on including those addresses in the Great American Cleanup, which will happen in April/May. Want to help us cleanup the neighborhood? Drop us a line.



SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL BUSINESS

by Theresa Harden Smith

The Beer Hub at 2643 Genesee Street

Open Monday to Saturday 12:00 pm until 10:00 pm.

Owners Colin Hubbell and his father Chris Hubbell

Opened July 2018

The Beer Hub is a neighborhood bar with a Belgian pub atmosphere, housed in a restored train depot that was part of the now defunct Delaware Lackawanna Western Railroad.

They have a large and well-curated selection of beers from various breweries representing classic styles and including German and Belgian beers. With 26 beers on tap, some rotating, the knowledgeable bartenders can find a beer even for the person who doesn't think they like beer. They also have two drafts dedicated to wine--a Cabernet and a Chardonnay. Utica Club is always available, a nod to our city and Saranac brewery.

The Beer Hub has food service with daily sandwich specials and a larger selection on Fridays and Saturdays. Every day you can order a fresh pretzel from the Kneady Baker. You can also fill a growler or purchase some hard to find beers to go.

Facebook page: The Beer Hub. Instagram: @the.beer.hub

UTICA RISING

(a regular feature where we talk about things in Utica we love)

Did you know that Utica College offers FREE films on Thursday nights at 7pm? For eight weeks at the beginning of each Fall and Spring semester, Jeff Miller of UC's Communication Department offers up free films. This film series has been going strong for 20 years, and is an amazing way to see wonderful films from all over the world that you might never otherwise even hear about. [Just click here for all the information you need.](#)

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