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South Utica Newsletter #22 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

Here it is, the final newsletter of my first term. It is much, much later than it should be. But I took some much needed down time after a hard campaign, and then the holidays took over. So this newsletter will include my votes for all of November and December.

New Chicken & Bees Legislation REPEALED

Lots of people spent years working on a new Zoning Ordinance. It took the efforts of many people in various capacities and departments - all in all, a big investment to move our City forward with a better, modern Zoning Code. In 2020 a close to final version of the new Code went to the Common Council. I pored over it for hours and hours. I made lots of suggestions, from grammatical to organizational to substantial changes to zoning law. Then, on February 3, 2021 the Council took the final step and passed this new Zoning Ordinance into law. The new Zoning Ordinance included regulations allowing property owners to keep a few hens, as well as bees, on their properties, with lots of specific

rules about how many hens one could have, what size their enclosure must be, how far such enclosure must be from neighboring properties, etc. Once we had passed these new regulations, I then told all of you about it in two newsletters in a row. Several months later, I discovered that in a completely different part of the City code, the very old law prohibiting fowl of any sort was still listed. So, we had contradictory laws on the books: an old one from 1968 prohibiting chickens altogether, and the new one from 2020 which allowed hens under very specific conditions. So, in order simply to clear up the books, as it were, and keep our Codes consistent, I introduced legislation to repeal the old 1968 rule. But once, I did this, I brought the new regulations to the attention of my colleagues, many of whom it turned out were completely unaware that the new zoning code allowed hens and bees. Long story short, against my vehement objections, and even against the unanimous recommendation of the Planning Board, which must give a recommendation prior to any part of the Zoning Ordinance being changed, a majority of the Common Council voted to amend the new Zoning Code in order to return to the earlier Code which does not allow hens (or bees) at all. I argued as best as I could, and was joined in my arguments by Councilman Moody. But we were the minority. As a weak nod towards the fact that people have invested time and money in keeping hens legally since the new Zoning Ordinance first passed last February, the new law is not scheduled to go into effect until January 1st of 2023. So there is time for us to consider how best to go forward. Please, if anyone in South Utica (or anywhere else in Utica), is currently keeping chickens and wants to keep them in accordance with the regulations as laid out in the Zoning Ordinance as passed on February 3, 2021, please reach out. I want to hear from you.



Time to Put Those Leaves in a Container

Green waste pickup season, where we can pile all the leaves and yard waste we want up at the curb, is over. The DPW is getting ready for snow season, which means putting plows on the trucks. So from now until Spring, put any green waste into barrels. We all need to pitch in and keep the streets free of extra debris so that it doesn't clog the storm drains and impede plowing efforts.



New Year's Eve Downtown Celebration!

The City of Utica and the Bank of Utica are once again hosting a Downtown New Year's Eve Celebration. The event kicks off tonight at 7pm with swearing in ceremonies for elected officials, including the Common Council. Then it's a full evening of music, live performances, horse drawn carriage rides, a chili cook off contest between our Police and Fire Departments, and more. I'd love to see you there!



SUNA Meeting Begins Again

Heather Wasielewski and Darren LaPlante are the new leaders of the South Utica Neighborhood Association meeting. SUNA now meets in the Ski Chalet at the Parkway Recreation Center. As always the meetings are held at 6pm on the second Monday of every month. I plan to get to the meeting no later than 5:30pm and work on Constituent Services. So please, by all means, drop by early if you want to discuss anything with me.

You can keep informed of their meetings and agendas by following them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UticaSouth>. They are working on a website as well, so stay tuned for that information.



Newsletter Archive Now Online

If you have found my Newsletters interesting and informative, I have good news. They are now all archived on my new, shiny purple website. I am very grateful to Zac and Heather Wasielewski for building me a beautiful new site!

[Newsletter Archive - See them all here!](#)

My Votes on the Council in November & December 2021

Here are all my votes in November and December. I am no longer going to break down my votes by specific dates, but rather group them by the month.

Resolutions I Voted For:

I called for Public Hearings on the sale of the following properties:

126 Eagle Street to Jose Raimer de la Cruz Hernandez
1007 Stark Street to Priscila Alvarez Armijos
1319 Steuben St & 1100 Schuyler St to Ramon Collado
701-703 Jay St to Congregata di Santa Rosalia
1110 Blandina St to Rayhanah Mynit

I voted to name a municipal pool in North Utica for M. Esthyr Fitzgerald.
I voted for a Resolution to honor the 100th anniversary of the founding of the United Way.

I voted for a Resolution Proclaiming to Honor Lieutenant Starr Wooden. Lt. Wooden became the first woman AND the first African-American officer to reach the rank of Lieutenant in the Utica Police Department.

I voted for a Proclamation to Honor Howard C. Welch. Mr. Welch served on the Utica Common Council for 26 years, and on the County Legislature for 2 years. He was also my neighbor, with a bike shop right behind my house on Auburn Ave, so I was especially happy to vote for this Resolution.

I voted for Resolutions to honor both Maria Pezzolanella McNiell and Jack LoMedico, who are leaving the Utica Common Council. I wish them both the best of luck!

I voted to authorize the Delta hotel to sell beer and wine at the Bank of Utica's New Year's Eve celebration.

Ordinances I Voted to Place in Committee:

I voted to place into committee an Ordinance authorizing the transfer of funds from one budget line to another.

I voted to place into Committee Ordinances to sell the following properties:

126 Eagle Street to Jose Raimer de la Cruz Hernandez
107 Stark Street to Priscila Alvarez Armijos
701-703 Jay St to Congregata di Santa Rosalia
1319 Steuben St & 1100 Schuyler St to Ramon Collado
1110 Blandina St to Rayhanah Mynit

I voted to send to Committee two Ordinances establishing a Reserve Funds to finance paving and to finance building alterations. I also voted to send to committee an ordinance to transfer funds from our Fund Balance -unrestricted- to three distinct Reserve Funds.

Ordinances I Voted For:

On November 17th I voted for two Ordinance to Rescind Chapters 2-5 of the City Code, Article III: Fowl, and Article IV: Bees. Only Delvin Moody and I voted for this Ordinance. (For full explanation of this issue, see above.)

I voted FOR ordinances to sell the following properties to the following people:

1311 Francis Street to Constance Williams

909 Kellogg Ave to Amy Rojas

1408 Kellogg Ave to Ronald Ricci

French Road Cemetery to David Giglio (This surprised and worried many people. Mr. Giglio has been taking good care of this little cemetery for many years. It had been previously abandoned, and so ownership of it had fallen to the City. Mr. Giglio will continue to maintain it as a Cemetery, which legally is the only legal option available to him. But as the only caretaker of it, and as an abutting property owner, he wants to own it.)

10 Foery Drive to Russell Pelli

1345 Leeds Street to Bui Thanh

413 Deland Drive to Muric Eldin

418 Woodburne Drive to Muric Eldin

807 Utica Rd to Juan Carlos Byars, GJ Holdings, LLC

126 Eagle Street to Jose Raimer de la Cruz Hernandez

107 Stark Street to Priscila Alvarez Armijos

I am always happy to vote on these sales, arranged as they are by the URA. These sales become homes for families, and put properties back on the tax rolls, where we all benefit from them.

I voted to amend the "Through Streets" law to make Tilden Avenue a through street from the intersection of Eagle to Tilden.

I voted to amend "Schedule C: Intersections where stop required" to include Bleeker and Tilden Ave, all corners, four way stop at each intersection. I voted to add a STOP sign on Patricia Lane, where it ends at Marlboro Road. I also voted to add STOP signs at the corners of Mortimer and Jefferson Streets. I voted to make the intersection of Dudley Ave and Mortimer Street into a four-way stop. I also voted to make Mortimer St. and Howard Ave (a t-intersection) into a one way stop. I voted to make the intersection of Neilon St and Mortimer St into a four-way stop.

I voted to change the hours of operation for Parks and Playgrounds to 6am til 9pm from April 15th til November 15th and from 6am til 7pm for the rest of the year.

I voted to transfer funds from "Off Street Parking Wages" to "Engineering

Contractual 811". I also voted to transfer funds from "Parks - Wages" to "Parks - Seasonal Employment". I also voted to transfer funds from "Contingency Account" to "Other General Government - Telephone" and from "Codes - Telephone", "Fire Communication - Other Equipment", and "Police Administration - Telephone" to "Fire Communications - Telephone". I also voted to transfer funds from "Softball" and "Youth - Salaries" to "Parkway Recreation Center - Equipment" to replace old fitness equipment there. I voted for another transfer from several separate Section 8 budget lines to another Section 8 budget line. I voted to transfer funds from one CARES Act budget line to another.

I voted to establish two Reserve Funds, which create "savings accounts" for specific purposes, and which cannot be used for any other purpose. We voted to create a Reserve Fund for paving and another for building alterations for the DPW Garage, as well as UPD and UFD buildings. Having established these Reserve Funds, I then voted to a total of 2 million dollars from our unrestricted fund balance into these two new reserve funds, along with into a previously established reserve fund for Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Fund. I am happy that we are preparing ourselves now for another busy paving season next year, and look forward to advocating for the paving of many streets in South Utica.

I voted to appoint David Roefaro as a Commissioner of Deeds.

I voted AGAINST two Ordinances to amend the Zoning Ordinance, in order to repeal the regulations allowing property owners to keep chickens and bees. Delvin Moody and I both argued as best we could against these Ordinances and voted together against them. These Ordinances passed 7 to 2. (For the full story, see above.

I voted for an Ordinance to erect signs and barriers to prohibit anyone from dumping any kind of waste or debris on City land at the rear of South Park Drive and Welshbush Rd. The effective date of this Ordinance is January 5, 2022.

Local Laws I Voted For:

I voted to establish a sustainable energy loan program in Utica. This is a program fully operated by New York State. But given that it involves liens upon real property, the City of Utica had to authorize it operating within our municipality. I believe that this program will facilitate commercial property owners being able to secure loans with which to add sustainable energy infrastructure to their properties.



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