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**Councilperson Celeste Friend**  
SOUTH UTICA - THIRD WARD



**cfriend@cityofutica.com**  
**315-725-5987**

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## South Utica Newsletter #24 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

These Newsletters take a lot of work - work I enjoy, but work nonetheless. So do me a favor, and forward them along to anyone who you think might be interested. Anyone can sign up by following the link below. (My newest plan is to send them as soon as possible after the second Council meeting of the month. So they should arrive mid-month or so.)

[Sign Up for This Newsletter](#)

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## Keep Up With Katie Aiello

The First Ward has a new Council member - Katie Aiello. Katie is a really great communicator, and had earned a reputation as an astute observer of the Common Council even before she joined us. So I really recommend keeping up with her and listening to her perspective on the issues before the Council and the City. Visit her website and sign up for her newsletter.



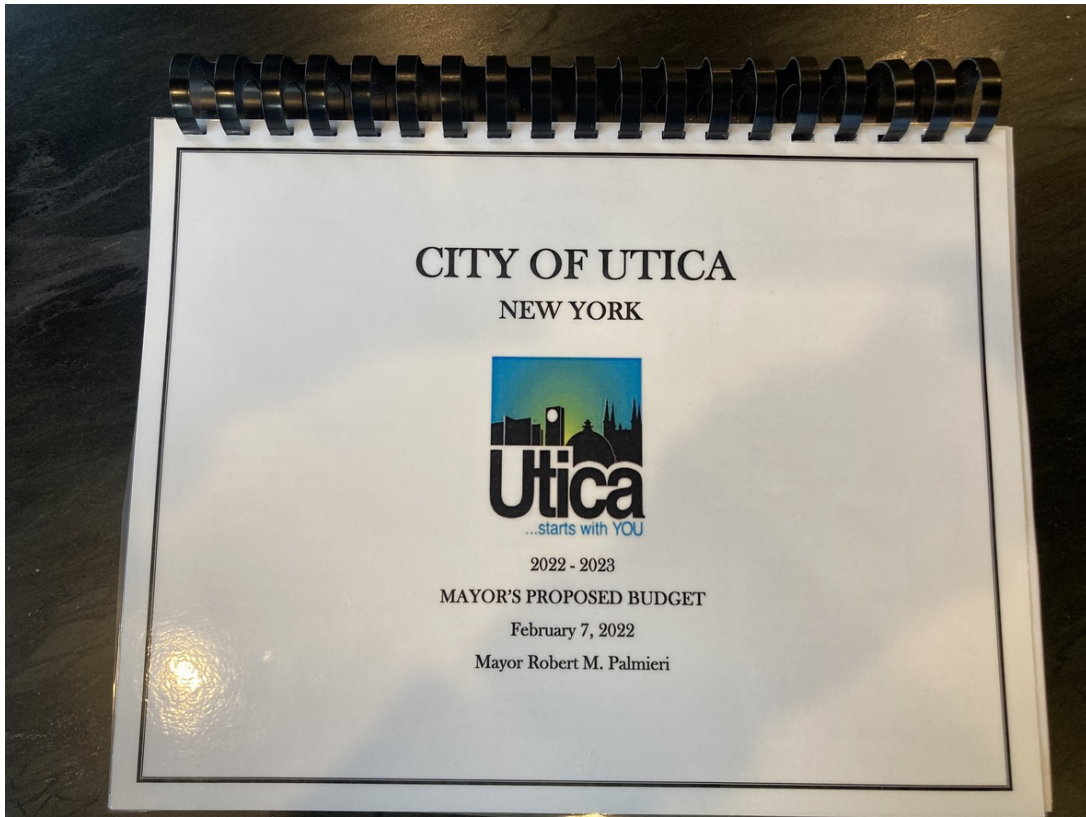
[Visit Katie Aiello's Website & Sign up for her Newsletter](#)

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## Budget Season Is Upon Us

The Council is now officially in budget season. The Mayor submitted his proposed budget to The Board of Estimate & Apportionment on February 7th and we then voted to approve it on February 14th. So now the budget is in the hands of the Council. We must approve it absolutely no later than March 31st, given that our new fiscal year begins on April 1st. (Although it will be better if we can pass it sooner than that, so that the Comptroller's Office can go ahead and prepare and mail our City tax bills as soon as the Council has approved the new tax levy.)

I will be sending out one of my "How Utica Works" newsletters soon, with all the details about how the budget works, the process by which it gets passed by the Council, and more. So stay tuned for that. Meanwhile, if you want to dig in to the proposed budget, just click on the link below.



## 2022-2023 Mayor's Proposed Budget

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# Watch Common Council Meetings Online

I've always encouraged everyone to attend Common Council meetings. Come and participate in our democratic process, even if only by witnessing the Council as we conduct the City's business. But if you can't come in person, you can always watch the livestream available on YouTube. So, young or old, on a computer or on your phone, even while eating pizza, feel free to tune in. Regular meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Our pre-meeting conference is at 6pm, and the Council meeting is at 7pm.



[Watch Common Council Live on YouTube](#)

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## Lead Safe Utica - Get the Lead Out

You are most likely aware that lead inside of our homes presents a real danger to all of us, but most especially to pregnant women and young children. The



Home Ownership center has funds available to you to get the lead out of our homes. All the details are in the flyer below.

**Hundreds of children are lead poisoned in Utica each year!**



**Is your home safe?**

We make properties lead safe at no cost to you. Tenants, owners and landlords can apply.

**Lead poisoning is 100% preventable**

The lasting negative effects of lead poisoning on children include:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Hearing loss, speech delays, learning disabilities and lower IQ
- Hyperactivity, behavioral problems and attention deficit disorder

**LEAD SAFE UTICA**

- Each unit is eligible for up to \$20,000 in lead remediation grants
- Properties may also qualify for additional healthy homes rehabilitation grants to remove mold, moisture, asthma triggers, improve air quality and increase energy efficiency

**MORE INFORMATION**

Phone: 315-724-4197 | Website: [LeadSafeUtica.com](http://LeadSafeUtica.com)

**PROGRAM DETAILS**

- Properties must be in the City of Utica
- House must be built before 1978
- Priority is given to units where a pregnant woman resides or a child under age 6 lives or visits frequently

Funding subject to income eligibility and program requirements



**HomeOwnershipCenter**

INVEST. RENEW. GROW.



**Lead Safe Utica - Learn More!**

## Vacant Building Registry Law

Vacant buildings, by nature of their vacancy, impose disproportionate costs on the neighborhoods in which they are located and on the entire City of Utica. I have therefore introduced to the Council an Ordinance that will give us a new tool with which to combat the problem of abandoned and vacant properties. This Vacant Building Registry will require that vacant buildings be registered with the City, and that annual fees be applied to those buildings to mitigate against the cost to the City of managing vacant buildings as they fall into disrepair. These fees will also offer an incentive to owners of vacant properties to rehabilitate their property and get them occupied again. I introduced this legislation and

asked the Council to agree to place it into Committee. This is a complicated piece of legislation and the Council will need to deliberate carefully before we decide whether to pass it. So we will discuss it in Committee, and I will invite officials from other cities who have found similar laws to be useful.

While some parts of the city have more vacant properties, South Utica certainly has its own share. Below are four that I could identify off the top of my head.



*Sunnyside Ave*



*Brighton Ave*



*Sunset & Barton Avenues*



*Woodlawn Ave East*

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## My Votes on the Council in February 2022

Here are all my votes in February. I am going to organize them a little differently from here on. I hope that this will make them easier to follow and understand, and slightly more concise. But, of course, if there is more you'd like to understand, please let me know.

**Commissioners of Deeds:** The Common Council can Resolve that eligible voters who reside in Utica should be allowed to be Commissioners of Deeds. This allows those people to collect ballot petition signatures from anyone in the City, regardless of party affiliation. After the Council passes them, these Resolutions are then sent to the County to be finalized. We Resolved that the following people be appointed as Commissioners of Deeds:  
Frank Vescera, Robert Warren Buttenschon, Terrance C. Gilbert, Lucretia D. Hunt, Hanka Grabovica, Fahir Garcic, Robert Matyi,

**Resolution to Raise Fees for Birth and Death Certificates:** Utica currently charges only \$10 for each birth and death certificate we provide. Once the new downtown hospital is complete, Utica will be responsible for issuing far more birth certificates. (All the babies born at St. Luke's are born in New Hartford.) This will require the City to hire more personnel in the Department of Legislation to do all this work. So it is time to raise this fee. Raising this fee is not up to Utica alone - instead it is up to the State. So I sponsored a Resolution asking the State to raise this fee, from \$10 to \$20. It passed unanimously. The City Clerk will now forward our Resolution to Senator Griffo and Assemblywoman Buttenschon, asking them to proceed with preparing the appropriate State legislation.

### **Resolution Supporting the Uptown Theatre's National Grid Grant**

**Application:** The Uptown Theatre is continuing to pursue grant funding to help them renovate their building. This grant, from National Grid, requires that they show that they have municipal support. (This is very common, namely that grantors want to know that the party applying for a grant has the support of the municipality in which they operate.) I sponsored this Resolution. It passed unanimously.

**URA Properties Sold:** All properties sold by the URA must be approved by the Council. They are approved of in three separate stages: first, we pass a Recall for a Public Hearing, then we place into Committee the legislation to authorize the sale, and finally, once that Public Hearing has been held, we vote on the Ordinance selling the property. So, here are the sales we authorized in February:

None! The URA is currently all out of properties to sell! This is unusual and evidence of growing demand for properties in our fair City!

**A Memorializing Petition to Keep SUNY Poly's New Nanoscale Science and Engineering** In her February "State of the State" address, Governor Hochul announced a proposal to reunify SUNY Poly's Nanoscale program with the University at Albany. SUNY Poly, and the investments made to its campus, are an important regional asset. So we call upon Governor Hochul and the State Legislature to abandon any plan to reunify this program with the University at Albany.

**Ordinance Establishing a Vacant Building Registry** I introduced this new legislation, described above. We placed this into Committee, and will be discussing it after a few weeks, once the work of passing the budget is behind us.

**Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week** We passed a Resolution recognizing February 14-21 as Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week. This Resolution was brought to the Council by Samantha Colosimo-Testa and then sponsored by the full council. It passed unanimously.

**Local Law Authorizing the Use of "Best Value" Procurement Standard"** This law allows the City of Utica to buy products and services not only on the basis of lowest price, but on best value, in accordance with New York State's Finance Law Section 163. Now that we have passed this local law, the City is free to buy the best supplies, materials, etc. that we can find in a very competitive market. Because of the American Rescue Plan Act, many municipalities across the country are competing for goods and services. We needed to pass this law so that we can enter that competitive market place.



Additionally, this law allows us to take into consideration whether a small business is a minority-owned or women-owned business.

**Note:** Generally speaking, Local Laws must "lay on the table", in their final form, for at least seven days, before the Council can vote on them. Because there was a timing issue here, the Mayor submitted to the Council a "letter of necessity" attesting to the need to pass this law immediately. We were then able to vote on it at the same meeting in which it was introduced. Passage required a strong majority of 2/3 votes. It was sponsored by the full council and passed unanimously.

**Legislation in Committee:** The following pieces of legislation have been placed in committee: (to see any legislation that is in Committee, just follow the link you see below)

**1) Annual Estimate:** This is the law that authorizes the City to generate revenues through taxation by a specific amount. We will not know the exact amount until we have finished with the Budget process. At that point, we will fill in the exact amount of the "Annual Estimate" and vote on it.

**2) Vacancy Building Registry** See above for my description of this new legislation I have now placed before the Council.

**3) Creating a Flood Mitigation Task Force for the City of Utica, New York**

**4) Amending the Composition of the Bureau of Police for the City of Utica, New York**

**5) Requesting the Administration Add More Members to the Utica Parks Department**

**6) Urging the City of Utica to Create Inclusive Playgrounds**

**7) A Local Law Entitled "Registration and Posting of Owner and Manager Information and Designation of Agent"**

**8) Ordinance Amending Composition of the Bureau of Fire**

**9i) Resolution in Support of the Replacement of all Lead Service Lines (private & public property) in Utica**

[All Legislation in Committee](#)

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**Report from E&A - January -**

# February

The Board of Estimate and Apportionment is a five person Board, on which I now serve, that oversees the day-to-day budget operations of the City. All transfers of monies from one area of the budget to another must be approved by E&A, as well as all expenditures of supplemental monies that come into the City. (Fascinated? Just wait for a special edition of "How Utica Works" on this important City Board.)

## **In January, E&A approved the following:**

- \* We moved \$3,787 from "Parkway Rec Center - Repairs" to "Parkway Rec Center - Other Equipment" to adjust for price increases for new fitness equipment.
- \* We moved \$2,000 from "Comptroller - Salaries" to "Comptroller - Contractual" and "Bond & Note Services" to adjust for unexpected parking ticket judge and lease expenses
- \* We moved \$1,085 from "CARES CDBG - Pandemic Stimulus Program" to "CARES CDBG - Utica Green Teams" to pay for an intern for the Utica Green Team
- \* We moved \$3,000 from "DPW Administration - Misc" and "DPW Administration - Education" to "DPW Administration - Contractual" to pay for the hauling of contaminants.
- \* We moved "\$6,800 from "Sign Shop - Supplies" to "Sign Shop - Repairs" to pay for unexpected bucket repair to the DPW Sign Shop truck
- \* We moved \$10,000 from "Fire Mechanic - Auto Materials" to "Fire Mechanic - Repairs" to pay for unexpected repairs to trucks and ladders
- \* We moved \$9,000 from "City Court - Other Equipment" to "City Court - Repairs" and "City Court - Contractual" in order to adjust for unexpected increases in cleaning costs, elevator maintenance, and updating judge's offices. (These expenses will be reimbursed by NYS Courts.)
- \* We moved \$5,000 from "Police Admin - Physican Fees" to "Police Admin - Water" to pay for unexpected increases in water and county sewer rates.
- \* We moved \$69 from "Youth - Gas & Oil" to "Payments to Outside Agencies" in order to adjust for contractual services to Centro Bus Service.

In February, so far, E&A has:

- \* passed the "Mayor's Proposed Budget", and thereby turned it into the "E&A Proposed Budget"
-

# Sign Up for Little League

One of the best signs that Spring is just around the corner? Time to sign up for Little League! Spread the word and get your kiddos signed up today!



# UTICA



On-line registration opening February 12<sup>th</sup> @ [UticaNYlittleleague.com](http://UticaNYlittleleague.com)  
Birth certificate, school enrollment or proof of residency necessary  
All kids age 4 (by 9/1/22) and still 12 (on 9/1/22)

Apply at the link below to cover registration costs.

Helping Cover Little League®  
**REGISTRATION FEES**  
FOR FAMILIES IN NEED IN  
Utica Little League

APPLY ONLINE  
[LittleLeague.org/CallUpGrant](http://LittleLeague.org/CallUpGrant)

T-Mobile

Little League and Minor League \$100 (ages 6-12)

T-Ball \$50 ages (4 and 5)

Each additional child for all levels \$50

***In person registrations will be***

*February 16<sup>th</sup>*

*North Utica Community Center 6:00pm - 8:00pm*

*February 19<sup>th</sup>*

*North Utica Community Center 10:00am - 12:00pm*

*March 3<sup>rd</sup>*

*Parkway Recreation Center 6:00pm - 8:00pm*



Call or Text Michael Gentile (315) 749-3281

Call John Mishlanie (315) 723-9080

Email: [Uticalittleleague@gmail.com](mailto:Uticalittleleague@gmail.com)

Facebook: @uticanylittleleague

*Dear Families and Community Members,*

*Utica Little League firmly believes in the mission statement of Little League, and looks forward each season to seeing the growth of the players as people on and off the field. Your child will work to become a better baseball player while also learning sportsmanship, how to be a good teammate, how to win, how to lose, and why character, loyalty and respect matters. Most importantly they will build relationships and memories that will last long after their time in Little League. We hope you join us in making 2022 the best season yet.*

MISSION STATEMENT

LITTLE LEAGUE® BELIEVES IN THE  
POWER OF YOUTH BASEBALL AND  
SOFTBALL TO TEACH LIFE LESSONS  
THAT BUILD STRONGER  
INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES.



Check Out Utica Little League

# Free Films at Utica College

Jeff Miller, Associate Professor of Communications at Utica College, curates and presents a film series at Utica College every semester. These free films, which you will not be able to see anywhere else, are shown on Thursday nights. Just click on the link below to see the full schedule.



[See Film@UC Schedule](#)

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## SUNA Really Gaining Steam

The South Utica Neighborhood Association continues to meet on the second Monday of every month at 6pm in the Ski Chalet at the Parkway Recreation Center. You can sign up for their regular newsletter just by following the link below. The February meeting had some really interesting speakers and great conversation. I'll be there every month by 5:30 to listen to constituents and learn about issues of concern to them.





[Sign up for the SUNA Newsletter](#)

## Newsletter Archive Now Online

If you have found my Newsletters interesting and informative, I have good news. They are now all archived on my website.

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



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