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



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## South Utica Newsletter #26 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

Another month, another newsletter - here it is, Newsletter #26. Enjoy. And as always, drop me a line with questions or concerns about anything I discuss here.

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## Take Advantage of the City's Sidewalk Program

As I've said elsewhere, sidewalks are an essential City infrastructure. They provide a basic safe form of transportation that is healthy, good for communities, and sustainable.

The City of Utica recognizes this. We have a Sidewalk Rebate Program to help you with the cost of replacing your sidewalk. Here's how it works:

Home owners are eligible for a rebate of \$4 per square foot of mainline sidewalk (this means the sidewalk that runs parallel to the street - not driveway aprons or walkways that run from the sidewalk to a house or to the street). (The reimbursement rate may go up. If it does, I'll let you know.)

CDBG applicants are eligible for \$6 per square foot if they live in a CDBG eligible district and meet ONE of the following criteria:

- 1) the street on which the property is located has been paved in the last 3 years
- 2) the homeowner is replacing asphalt or slate with concrete
- 3) the property is located in the "Center City" where Utica Neighborhood Housing Services has improved the home's exterior
- 4) the property was purchased from the URA

Any home that meets any of these criteria is also eligible for rebates for driveway aprons and private walkways from the curb to the sidewalk.

In order to apply for the City's sidewalk program, homeowners need to:

- 1) fill out a sidewalk permit application from the City Engineering Department, located on the second floor of City Hall
- 2) hire a contractor
- 3) property owner OR contractor then obtains the actual permit
- 4) contractor schedules a pre-pour inspection with the Engineering Department
- 5) once the sidewalk is done, the home owner or contractor returns final paperwork with a copy of the paid bill, or bill for all materials if the homeowner does the work themselves
- 6) the Engineering Department inspects the sidewalk to make sure that it meets all specifications
- 7) the paperwork is processed and reimbursement is processed

It's pretty straightforward - get the work done in the right way, fill out some simple paperwork, get reimbursed. Then you can sit on your porch, and watch the people go by on your beautiful, new smooth contribution to the community. Questions? Just call Andrew Karas at 315-792-0152. (He's a nice man, and is happy to help you with the process.)



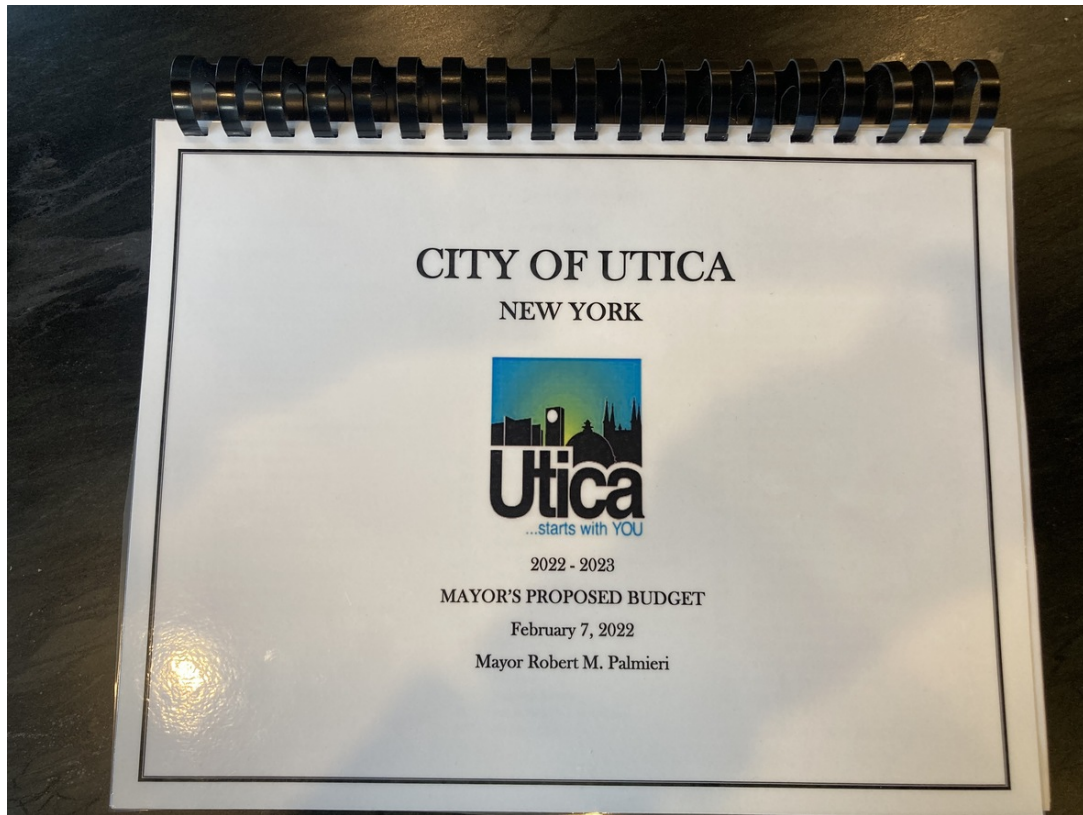
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## NEW BUDGET, SAME TAX RATE

By Charter, the Common Council is required to pass the Budget by March 20th, in order to give the Comptroller time to get the new tax bills prepared and mailed out. And so, on March 16th, we voted unanimously to pass the Budget. We passed it exactly as the Mayor proposed it, and as the E&A passed it.

I did make an effort to amend the Budget. As I described in my recent Budget newsletter, the Budget can only be amended by separate Ordinances. So I submitted a total of six separate Ordinances to make additions to the Budget. My Ordinances would have done the following: added 3 new Codes Officers, added 1 new DPW worker, added \$50,000 to our stormwater budget line, added \$40,000 to Fire Department repairs in order to make necessary improvements to the Shepherd Place fire house, and added \$20,000 to the Engineering salary line in order to better attract new Engineers to work for the City. Had these passed, as I proposed them, this would have raised our tax rate by less than 1%, which comes out just a little more than \$1 a month for the average homeowner. **I firmly believe the most responsible fiscal approach is to raise taxes incrementally, over time, in order to be able to keep pace with the rising costs of providing the services we all depend on.** I worry that in the not-too-distant-future, we will have to raise taxes substantially, all at once, in order to keep pace with rising costs. But I did not have near enough support in the Council to pass my Ordinances, so I withdrew them. I voted for the Budget as it was presented to us. The Council chose not to make even one

single change to any aspect of the Budget. Rather, the Budget we passed was exactly the Budget the Mayor proposed. I did qualify my vote to express my concerns that not raising taxes this year will simply kick the can down the road and force us to make painful decisions later.



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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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## Keep America & Utica Beautiful

**Save the Date: Saturday, April 23rd**, we will be heading out to clean up South Utica. This will be our second year in a row of putting together a team for the

Keep America Beautiful and Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful efforts. We went out last year with a big team of over 12 volunteers and cleaned up 5 separate sites in South Utica, while people all across our City did the same. So join our team! Here are the two things you can do to be involved:

**Drop me a line**, just by replying to this email, to let me know that you want to join us. As the date approaches, I'll give you all the details you need.

**Make suggestions** for where we need to clean up. Again, just drop me a line.



*In 2021, we had a big, happy team who cleaned up all across South Utica.*



*We dragged lots and lots of old trash out of the woods at the end of Lyon Place.*

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## Shooting Range Regulation

# Introduced

Recently, I discovered that there was NO City legislation that would regulate the operation of shooting ranges in the City of Utica. Shooting ranges offer gun owners the opportunity to practice safe gun ownership and use. But in a City like ours, they need to be carefully designed in order to ensure public safety. The idea that we would allow shooting ranges, where people fire guns with live ammunition, inside our City limits without any regulation whatsoever is simply, on the face of it, completely at odds with any common sense principles of public safety. On March 2nd, I introduced legislation that would offer just such design requirements. I adapted the legislation from legislation already on the books in Kingston, NY, which itself had been adapted from legislation in Rochester, NY. Among the specific regulations are the need for a ventilation system, sound proofing, an appropriate "bullet trap", how close such a range can be to such places as hospitals and youth recreational facilities, and rules ensuring the safety of customers using the range. For now the legislation remains in Committee, but I hope to be able to pass it soon.



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## My Votes on the Council in March 2022

Here are all my votes in March. 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. All votes described below were unanimous unless otherwise noted. 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:  
Alma Mujanic

**Resolution acknowledging Frank DiBrango as the new Chairperson of our Committee of the Whole and Katie Aiello as the Vice Chairperson of the same.** This passed 6-3, with Councilmembers Colosimo-Testa, Williamson, and Betrus voting against it.

**Calling for a Public Hearing Re: Annual Estimate 2022-2023:** The Common Council is required by law to hold a Public Hearing before we can vote on the Annual Estimate. We called for the Public Hearing on March 2nd, and held it on March 16th

**Annual Estimate 2022-2023:** This is the legislation that constitutes the Common Council passing the Budget. Essentially, it is the total tax levy, i.e., the total amount of money we will be raising through property taxes. For 2022-2023, the tax levy is \$30,224,651. We passed the Annual Estimate unanimously. (For more information, see above.)

**Proclamation to Recognize Councilmember Delvin Moody:** Delvin Moody has now formally resigned from the Common Council. Our March 16th meeting was his final meeting. And so, in keeping with our tradition, we recognized his service on the Council with a Proclamation that Councilmember Frank Meola read and presented to Councilmember Moody.

**Transfers of Funds:** According to Local Law, anytime that \$15,000 or more is transferred from one budget line to another by E&A, such a transfer must be approved by the Common Council.

**From "ARPA - Foreclosure Prevention Counseling" To "ARPA - Anita's Steven Swan (Pet Population Control)** in the amount of \$400,000. This was a reallocation to account for the fact that we found funds for the Foreclosure Prevention Counseling from another grant, and so decided to give Steven Swan more money so that they can do more to help us spay and neuter feral cats.



**From "Police Benefits - Retirement" To "Police Administration - Gas & Oil"** to adjust for unexpected cost of gas.

**From "City Benefits - Retirement" To "Engineering - Contractual 811"** \$33,005 in order to adjust for unexpected Dig Safely usage

**From "Fire Benefits - Retirement" To "Fire Mechanic - Repairs"** to pay for unexpected repairs to a fire truck.

**Resolution Determining That Action to Undertake Certain Projects Will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Environment.** This is a regular type of Resolution that confirms that particular projects do not need prior environmental study before being undertaken.

**Creating a Flood Mitigation Task Force:** This legislation creates a task force to deal with flooding in the City. I had reservations about how this task force was originally organized, because I worried that it would be excessively duplicative of other efforts already taking place, and use up the valuable time of City employees. The original sponsor of the legislation, Councilmember Colosimo-Testa, amended the legislation so that it would only meet once a year and within 30 days of a flood deemed significant by FEMA, and that it would only have 7 members. (The original legislation specified monthly meetings, and 18 members.) Given the amendments, I decided to vote for it. It passed 7-2, with Councilmembers Meola and Burmaster voting against it.

**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!

**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.)

**Bond Ordinance:** Every year, once the Budget is passed, the Council turns its attentions to the Mayor's proposed capital plan. This means considering legislation to authorize bonds to fund particular long term and short term projects.

**Ordinance Establishing a Vacant Building Registry** We have kept this legislation in Committee while we have been busy with Budget legislation.

**Honoring the Life of Patrica Zajac:** We are keeping this Resolution in

committee in order to arrange to have Patricia Zajac's family present in the Council Chambers when we consider this legislation.

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

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

**Shooting Ranges** This is my legislation, which would regulate the design and operation of shooting ranges in the City of Utica, described above.

**Resolution Requesting Each District Councilperson Allocate Funding to Establish A Business Directory App to Help Support and Revitalize the Business of Utica** This is a Resolution by Councilmember Colosimo-Testa for Councilmembers to pool some of our ARPA funding.

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## Why Shopping Locally Matters

I have long argued that as much as we can, we should all "Buy Local". When we spend our dollars in our own communities, we support those communities. As a sign I once saw read, "Keep Your Business in Your Community, Keep Your Community in Business". My go-to example of this is that when we buy our coffee at Cafe Domenico, any profits go no farther than Grant Street, where the Domenico family lives. But when you buy your coffee at a Dunkin Donuts, the profits go to Massachusetts, where that company is headquartered. So I have long advocated for supporting the small, independent businesses that are the heart of our local economy.

But here is another reason for keeping your business right here in Utica: when you shop here in Utica, the sales taxes you pay go to Utica, to help support the services and government that you rely on. And now, due to a 2018 Supreme Court decision, online purchases are subject to the same sales taxes as traditional purchases. So even shopping online, rather than driving to another municipality, contributes to our sales tax revenues. When you pay sales taxes in Utica, you are contributing to one of our major revenue streams. (In the 2022-2023 Budget for the City of Utica, sales taxes are estimated to bring in approximately 15.9 million dollars.) So please keep that in mind when you decide where and how to shop, and help Utica's bottom line by keeping it local when you can.



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## Report from E&A - February - March 2022

The Board of Estimate and Apportionment is a five person Board, on which I 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 February, E&A introduced and then passed the "Mayor's Proposed Budget" and thereby turned it into the "E&A Proposed Budget". This was accomplished on February 7th and February 14th.

### **Transfers:**

In February, E&A passed the following Resolutions, authorizing these transfers:

- \* \$750 from "Engineering - Printing" to "Engineering - Other Supplies"
- \* \$3,000 from "Central Garage - Auto Materials" to "Central Garage - Repairs"
- \* \$42,000 from "Police Benefits - Retirements" to "Police Administration - Gas & Oil" - this is to adjust for unexpected increases in gas prices - notice this - this is going to be an ongoing issue in the coming months - the City, just like the rest of us, is paying more for gas than it expected to
- \* A total of \$9,300 from "Fire Training - Education and Training" and "Fire Line -

Physician Fees" to "Fire Line - Other Materials & - Repairs", "Fire Administration - Physician Fees", and "Fire Prevention - Postage"

\* A total of \$13,000 from "Parks Maintenance - Travel & - Seasonal Employment", "Playgrounds - Other Supplies & - Repairs" to "Parks Maintenance - Water" to, again, account for unexpected raise in the cost of water - again, this is going to be an issue going forward - the City uses a lot of water, and we are going to have to pay more for it

\*\$2,700 from "Street Cleaning - Education & Training" to "Parks - Trees, Flowers, Shrubs" to adjust for unexpected tree removal on the Parkway

\* \$13,000 from "Youth - Contractual & Travel" and "Infrastructure - Wages" to "Youth - Other Equipment" to buy 2 new portable basketball units

\* \$300 from "Golf - Education & Training" to "Golf - Memberships" to adjust for unexpected membership in national golf associations

\* \$9,922 from a number of "Infrastructure" budget lines to "Sign Shop - Other Equipment and Other Supplies" to adjust for the purchase of a new large printer for street signs. (This is actually called a "sign plotter".)

\* \$4,400 from "Contingency" to "Parkway Rec Center - Repairs" to pay for repairs to the HVAC system at the Parkway Rec Center.

\* \$120 from "City Clerk - Office Equipment" to "City Clerk - Software" to adjust for higher than expected software for 6 new computers.

\* \$33,005 from "City Benefits - Retirement" to "Engineering - Contractual 811" to adjust for unexpected 811 Dig Safely usage

\* \$30,000 from "Fire Benefits - Retirement" to "Fire Mechanic - Repairs" to adjust for unexpected expenses related to fire truck repairs

\* \$100 from "Building Codes - Printing" to "Codes - Repairs" for the purchase and installation of a car battery for Codes

\* \$5,000 from "Law - Contractual" to "Law - Subscriptions" to adjust for unexpected increase in legal research expenditures

\* \$6,301 from "Police Administrative - Uniforms" to "Police Administrative - Contractual" & "Police CID - Software" to adjust for unexpected expenses related to hiring and software

\* \$12,600 from "Central Garage - Auto Materials, Education & Training, & Miscellaneous" to "Central Garage - Repairs & Other Equipment" to adjust for unexpected snowplow repairs

\* \$12,551 from "Contingency" to "Bond & Note Services" to adjust for unexpected legal services

\* \$1,000 from "DPW Administration - Overtime" to "DPW - Contractual" to pay for higher than expected random drug testing

\* \$963 from "Assessor - Travel" to "Assessor - Computer Equipment" to adjust for unexpected purchase of computer for new employee

\* \$2,000 from "Common Council - Miscellaneous" to "Common Council - Contractual" to pay for unexpected video services of Common Council

meetings

Also, in February, the Board of E&A authorized the Comptroller to make a large number of Supplemental Appropriations. This amounted to a total of almost 30 million of ARPA funds being allocated to specific projects in the City. This is the third allocation of funds from the American Recovery Plan Act. Since this is outside of the normal Budget process, E&A must authorize these allocations of these federal monies. We authorized the following allocations: Brownfield Remediation, improvements to Chancellor Park, discretionary funds to the Common Council, Varick Streetscaping, Westside Senior Center, ADA Compliance for City parks, Johnson Park Center, Roscoe Conkling Park, Renaissance Center, Covid Protective Measures, Gun Violence, Paving, a new Fire Truck and exhaust systems and repairs to fire trucks, 4 new snow plows, Bertolini Clubhouse, body cams & tasers for the UPD, and, lastly, monies for Anita's Stevens-Swan pet population control programs.

Another Supplemental Appropriation that E&A authorized in February was for \$135,274.50 from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) to install pay stations in City parking garages, and to create a new City parking lot near Baggs Square. We also authorized \$37,000 in Supplemental Appropriation from the Edwin J. Wadas Grant to pay for activities at Val Bialas Ski Center.

We voted to amend the Table of Organization for the Department of Police - Wages (Budget Line A53123-Wages). Only the Board of Estimate and Apportionment can add individual lines for employees to the Budget. So this Resolution added those lines, the funding for which we had already approved.

We voted to amend the Table of Organization to change one "Laborer" to "Seasonal Laborer", which come with a minor pay increase, from \$15/hour to \$17/hour. This is to meet the requirements of the Edwin J. Wadas Grant.

We voted to amend the Table of Organization in the Department of Informational Technology to change one Provisional Computer Support Specialist (grade 16) to Provisional Computer Specialist (grade 22).

We voted to amend the Table of Organization in the Department of Youth Bureau to delete one laborer and add one Recreational Specialist.

We voted to amend the Table of Organization in the Department of Parks to delete one laborer and add one Maintenance Mechanic

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# 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)

<p>Apply at the link below to cover registration costs.</p>	<p>Little League and Minor League \$100 (ages 6-12) T-Ball \$50 qges (4 and 5) Each additional child for all levels \$50</p> <p><b><i>In person registrations will be</i></b> <b><i>February 16<sup>th</sup></i></b> <b><i>North Utica Community Center 6:00pm- 8:00pm</i></b></p> <p><b><i>February 19<sup>th</sup></i></b> <b><i>North Utica Community Center 10:00am – 12:00pm</i></b></p> <p><b><i>March 3<sup>rd</sup></i></b> <b><i>Parkway Recreation Center 6:00pm - 8:00pm</i></b></p> <p>Call or Text Michael Gentile (315) 749-3281 Call John Mishlanie (315) 723-9080 Email: <a href="mailto:Uticalittleleague@gmail.com">Uticalittleleague@gmail.com</a> Facebook: @uticanylittleleague</p>
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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](#)

# Regular SUNA Meetings

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 March meeting had some really interesting speakers and great conversation. The organizers will soon be announcing a School Board candidates forum. 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](#)

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