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#### ELECTION 2020

Last week we saw record voter turnout all across America. Here in NYS, people were able to vote in all sorts of ways that they found convenient: by absentee/mail-in ballots, during Early Voting, and on Election Day. This high voter turnout is extremely encouraging for the future of American democracy. I am a Democrat, so obviously I cast my votes for Biden/Harris and for Anthony Brindisi, and it is my fervent hope that they win. (I voted early, on October 25th, at MVCC.) But more than that, I hope that this time of increased voter participation and active citizenry is here to stay. No matter who wins this year, there will work to be done, and we need active and engaged citizens to do it.

#### FLOODING

A few days ago marked the one year anniversary of the terrible Halloween floods that harmed so many in our communities. In that time different agencies have made efforts towards mitigating the risk of flooding. Here is a summary of those efforts:

##### City of Utica

Over the last year, the City of Utica has, through the hard work of its Engineering Department, worked hard to clean out storm drains, sewer lines, and catch basins. They have done this across the City, often by contracting with private companies such as National Water Main Cleaning Company. Here in South Utica, they rebuilt a culvert that runs behind Oneida Street, just next to Calvary Cemetery and rebuilt the concrete headwall where that water heads under Oneida Street.

##### Sauquoit Creek Basin Intermunicipal Commission

I continue to attend these monthly meetings of the Commission tasked with addressing the various flooding issues posed by the Sauquoit. The Commission has just hired a local engineering firm to do an extensive study of the Creek, and develop a plan that the municipalities can then use to remove debris from the creek bed and stabilize the banks so that more debris doesn't accumulate. (I am friends with one of these engineers, Maggie Reilly, who presented to one of the flooding meetings I held last year.) There is also discussion of creating some water storage facilities upstream from Utica, which can help to alleviate flooding by decreasing the rate of water flow after heavy rains.

### FLOODING RELIEF STILL AVAILABLE

I was contacted recently by a representative of the First Presbyterian Church of Utica. They still have funds to distribute to people in Utica who were impacted by last year's floods. If you would like to apply for these funds, please email Pastor Jeanne Kumbalek. Her email is kumbalekj@gmail.com.

### THE NEW ZONING ORDINANCE

The Common Council continues to study the new zoning ordinance and make what we see as necessary adjustments in the process of adopting a new Zoning plan. The hope is that this will give all of us a new, streamlined, and environmentally updated zoning code as we move into a bright new future. A recent water bill contains a notification from the City about this Zoning update. The Council will have to weigh in by passing this zoning plan as an Ordinance. If at least 10 people are interested, I would be happy to arrange a meeting for South Utica about this Zoning plan. So please let me know if you would come to such a meeting. [You can check out the new zoning code here.](#)

### RIDE ALONG WITH THE UPD

On Friday, October 23rd, I was given the opportunity to go on a "Ride Along" with the Utica Police Department. I joined Sergeant Kerry Carville for the second half of the 4pm to midnight shift. Sergeant Carville is a shift supervisor, so her duties included being out in the field assisting other officers as they patrolled their areas and responded to calls. It was an extremely instructive four hours, and I gained an insight to the life of our city that I could not have gained in any other way. I am very appreciative to Sergeant Carville for helping me to learn more about how policing works here in Utica, and to Deputy Chief Ed Noonan for affording me this opportunity.



#### 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](mailto:celeste4utica@gmail.com). I work on Constituent Services 7 days a week, so reach out anytime.

#### OLD BENDIX SITE

Over the last few months, Constituents have repeatedly reached out to me about the status and condition of the old Bendix site, located at the corner of French Road and Seward Avenue. I have been able to establish a regular contact with the property manager of the site, who works out of Syracuse. He did arrange to get much of the trash picked up along the fence on Seward Ave. The sidewalk remains in bad shape, with broken glass, gravel, and sand covering portions of it. The property manager is in the process of hiring a local custodian who will be able to take regular care of the

property, and I am confident that with continuing communication from me, that property can be maintained appropriately. I did some basic research at the Assessor's office and determined that the wooded property on each side of Lyon Place is also part of the same property. There is some illegally dumped materials and miscellaneous trash to be cleaned up there. I have asked the property manager to clean this up as well, and he has assured me that the new custodian he is hiring will do this very soon. I will stay on top of this until that entire area is clean.



#### SPOTLIGHT ON A LOCAL BUSINESS!

And now that we are bit by bit returning to normal, I thought it was time to bring back our "Spotlight on Businesses" in South Utica. I am grateful to my friend Theresa Smith for taking on this portion of the Newsletter. (Have an idea for a business to highlight? Let me know.)

#### **Stathis Greek Restaurant & Gyro**

Stathis, our local South Utica Greek restaurant, opened about two years ago. You can eat in the cozy restaurant or order delivery or take out. The owner, Stathis Koulouris says: "It has always been my dream to open up my own restaurant."

1900 Genesee Street, Utica

Hours: Monday- Saturday 11:00 am- 8:00 pm,  
Sunday closed

Telephone number: 315-624-0323

[www.stathisgreek.com](http://www.stathisgreek.com)

FaceBook: Stathis Greek Restaurant & Gyro

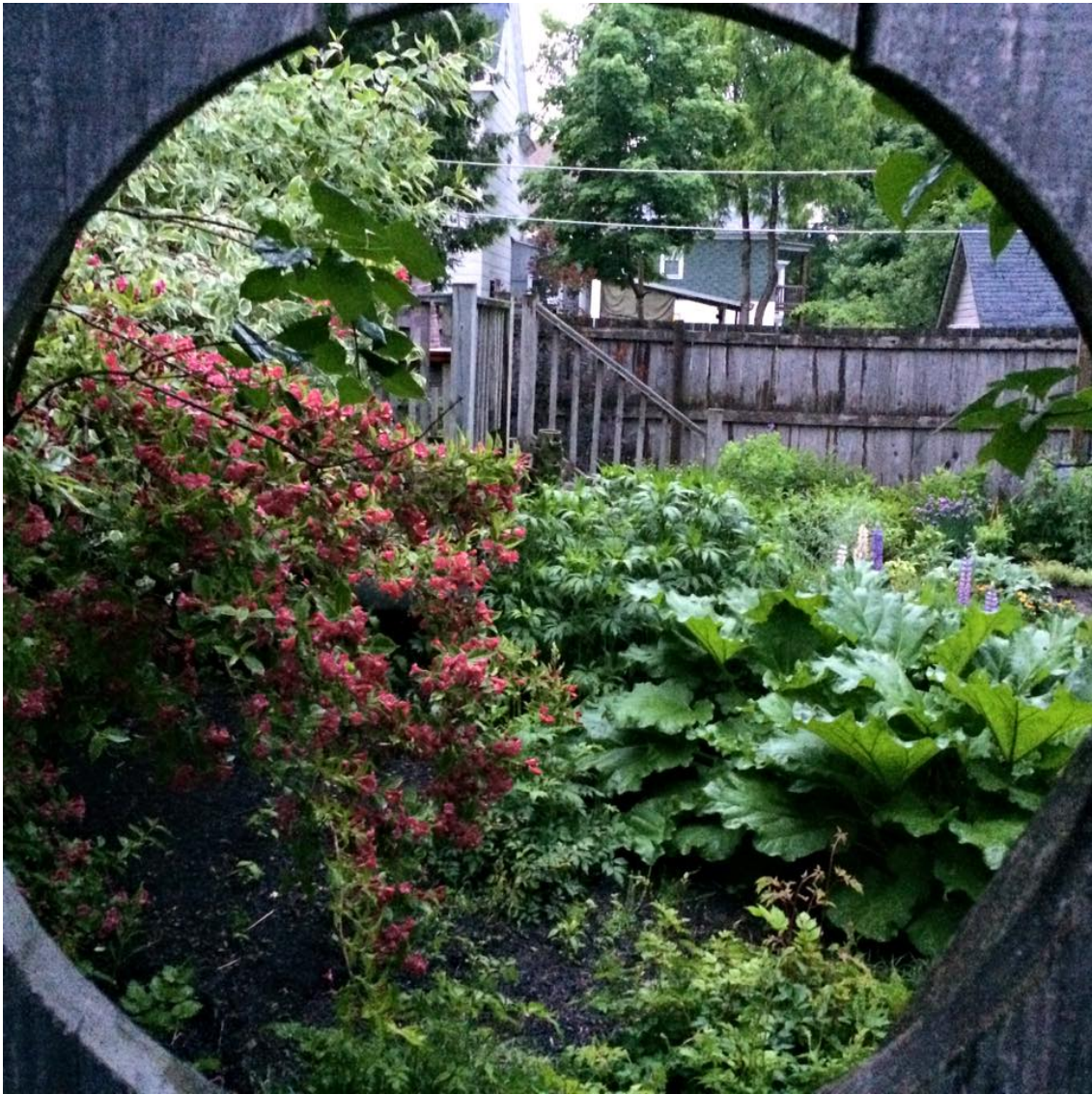
Email [stathisuticagreek@gmail.com](mailto:stathisuticagreek@gmail.com)





CALLING ALL SOUTH UTICA GARDENERS!

There are many terrific gardens and gardeners in South Utica. Gardens can do a lot to beautify our neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for all of us. There is now a new group of gardeners in South Utica who are looking forward to sharing their knowledge and more come Spring. Email me if you would be interested in joining them.



## MY VOTES ON THE COUNCIL

October 7, 2020

I voted AYE to appoint Nedim Mujic as a Commissioner of Deeds for the City of Utica. I voted AYE to schedule five public hearings for properties to be sold by the URA, and to place the legislation for the sale of those properties into committee. I also voted AYE to place other pieces of legislation into committee: an Ordinance to adjust the fees and charges for the use of the City-owned bandshell, and a non-binding Resolution to encourage NYS lawmakers to revise laws surrounding resisting arrest.

October 21, 2020

I voted AYE for five Ordinances to sell five separate properties through the URA. I voted AYE on two Resolutions that allow Utica to pursue grants for the identification, assessment, and remediation of brownfields here in Utica. I voted AYE to reduce some interests, penalties and fees for a property now owned by the Mohawk Valley Land Bank.

I voted to appoint Emma Ferguson to the City of Utica Youth Common Council, and was very happy to do so. Emma is a senior at Proctor High School, and plans to go to college to study political science. Emma is a very smart, committed young person

who I'm sure will continue to make Utica proud. I am looking forward to getting to know her better.

I voted AYE to adjust the fees and charges for the rental of the city-owned bandshell. Lastly, I voted AYE for a Resolution that would change the legal designation of a portion of Herkimer Road. This is a problem that Councilmember Joe Betrus has been working very hard on, in response to concerns of his Constituents who are very much bothered by the heavy truck traffic that travels on that road. This was Councilmember Betrus's Resolution, but he had everyone's support, so this was sponsored by the Full Council.

We also placed into Committee my Ordinance on Refuse and Garbage. This was my piece of legislation, that was requested by Codes Commissioner Marques and written for me by Judge Garramone. (More about this legislation in my next Newsletter.)

I voted AYE on my own Resolution requesting that the Mayor again allow the public to attend Common Council meetings. The Council Chambers are under the jurisdiction of the Council alone, but we need the Mayor to allow people to pass through the City Hall lobby, and he is not yet ready to do so, for a number of practical and safety reasons. I miss having the public present at our meetings, and am looking forward to the day when we are all together again. Meanwhile, all meetings of the Council are live streamed on the City's YouTube channel, and I encourage you to watch our meetings from home.

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