

Like

Tweet



Councilperson Celeste Friend
SOUTH UTICA - THIRD WARD



cfriend@cityofutica.com
315-725-5987

Follow on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

South Utica Newsletter #31 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

Happy Halloween! I'm fully back into the Newsletter groove. So here you, go, my 31st Newsletter! My next Newsletter will be out sometime after November 16th.

As always, please forward this email to anyone you know who might enjoy it. They can easily sign up just by clicking the link below.

[Sign Up for This Newsletter](#)

The very latest update on Stewart's Shop on Genesee St

On Monday, October 24th, the Scenic & Historic Commission met to discuss a few proposals before it. Their agenda included a return to the previously tabled request from Stewart's Shops to tear down the occupied house at the corner of

Woodlawn Ave and Genesee. They continued to discuss the question. Two members made it clear that they would not vote for tearing that occupied house down. One member said she was comfortable with the proposal, and another had not yet decided. But because the fifth member of the Board was not present, Stewart's asked them to table the proposal again, and they agreed to that. This means that they will once again be taking up this proposal at the next meeting - **Monday, November 28th, 4pm, Council Chambers**. I encourage everyone who is interested in this issue to come to this meeting. And the good news is that because they are putting this decision off, I will finally be able to provide public input to this process, because my Local Law will be in effect. (For more about this Local Law, see below.)



My Local Law

I believe that the people of Utica should be able to provide input to large projects that impact the quality of their lives and neighborhoods. I believe that when people are regularly denied this input, they risk becoming estranged and

alienated from their government, and democracy suffers. This has been my view all along: government needs to engage citizens in order to be able to function well so that the very promise of government can be met: making it possible for us to do together the things that we cannot do alone.

When Stewart's proposed to build a gas station/convenience store on South Genesee Street (at the old Raspberries), I went to the Planning Board to represent the many, many people in South Utica who objected to the plan. I asked to be allowed to speak, and was denied. I then went to the Scenic & Historic Commission meeting, and was denied again. So I decided that we needed a law to give Councilmembers the right speak at certain meetings: in particular, at Planning Board and Scenic & Historic Commission meetings. (All meetings of the Zoning Board of Appeals are already Public Hearings, so everyone already has the right to speak at those.)

So, to this end, on October 5th, I introduced a Local Law, sponsored by myself and Councilmember Katie Aiello, that would allow Councilmembers to speak at Planning Board and Scenic & Historic meetings about projects in their own districts. This means that I, as Councilmember for the Third Ward, could speak in regards to any project in the Third Ward, as could any of the At-Large Councilmembers. But I could not speak in relation to a project in any other Ward. At our October 5th meeting, we agreed to lay this law on the table. (NYS law requires that Local Laws lay on the table in their final form for at least 7 days prior to being voted on.) Then on October 19th, we voted on it and it passed, 8-1. Councilmember Venice Ervin was the sole "nay" vote.

Local Laws do not become effective immediately upon passing. Once it passes the Council, it goes to the Mayor's desk. The Mayor can then veto it, and send it back to the Council. If the Mayor vetoes it, then the Council can then override that veto if they have at least 6 votes. (For this reason, any Mayor is unlikely to veto a law that passed by at least 6 vote - that is veto-proof.) Or, the Mayor can then hold a Public Hearing, which gives the public input to the law, and then he or she can sign it. Or, lastly, if it sits on the Mayor's desk for 30 days, and no action is taken, it automatically becomes effective.

In this instance, I do not believe that the Mayor will veto it, since it passed with 8 votes. So he will either hold a Public Hearing and sign it, or simply let it become a law by not acting on it in any way. In either case, it should be effective by November 28th, in time for the next Scenic & Historic Commisison meeting. (See above.) So I will have the right to speak at this next meeting and I will represent the people of South Utica at that meeting.



Photo: an image of the Bosnian Mosque on Court Street at the intersection of Broadway

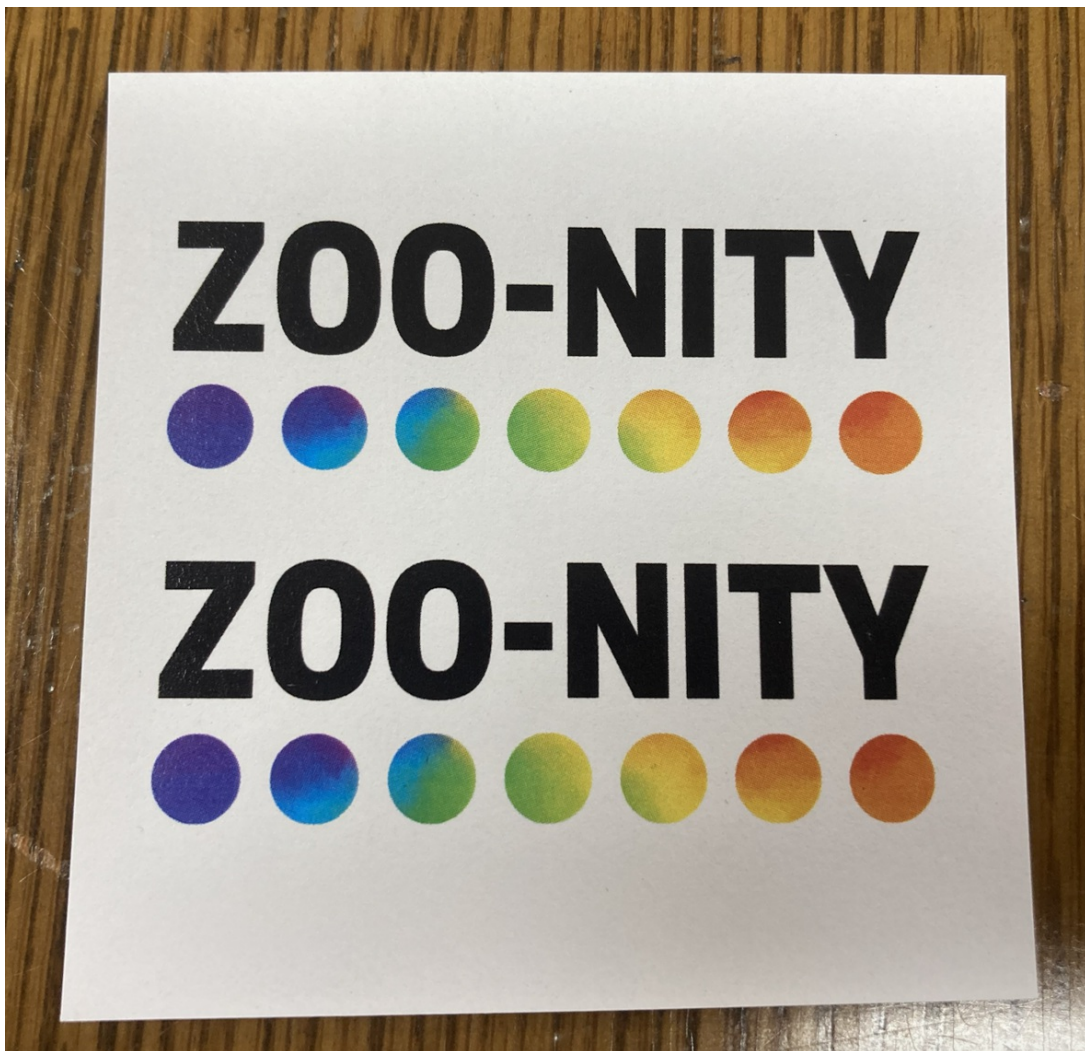
The Utica Zoo has a new union

Our beloved Utica Zoo has been busy lately. In September, they had to close their doors for a few days in order to make some necessary repairs in order to pass a required inspection from the USDA, the Federal agency that authorizes zoos to operate. They made those repairs, passed the inspection, and reopened. Meanwhile, over 20 workers at the Zoo decided that they wanted to form a union, and sought the assistance of a well established Upstate union - CSEA Local 1000, which also represents workers at zoos in Syracuse and Buffalo.

The workers who were unionizing reached out to Katie Aiello, who looped me in, and we met with the Zoo workers and union organizers on October 3rd. Katie and I then wrote a Resolution in support of their organizing efforts and encouraging the Zoo administration to enter into a voluntary agreement with the union. We introduced our Resolution to the Council on October 5th. Originally sponsored by myself and Katie, it then went "full council", meaning that it was

sponsored by each member of the Council. It passed unanimously. About 40 members from various unions were present, and it felt really good to pass this Resolution with their support in the room. Utica is and always will be #unionstrong.

On Thursday, October 20th, the Zoo workers cast their votes to form a union. The election was overseen by the National Relations Labor Board. The workers voted overwhelmingly, 20 to 1, to form a union! The union movement in the United States is on the upswing right now, and I'm very happy to see Utica be part of this growing trend. Unions make all of us better off!



Complete Streets - Genesee from Cottage Place to Oriskany Blvd

Complete Streets is an important idea whose time has finally come for Utica.

The basic idea of Complete Streets is that streets should accommodate all forms of transportation that humans use to move around: bikes, walking, public transportation, and cars. ([Read all about Complete Streets here.](#)) So, rather than making streets just for cars and forcing other forms of transportation to compete with those cars, Complete Streets make room for everyone. Complete Streets are safer and more equitable. People in Utica have been advocating for Complete Streets for at least a decade. And in 2016, the Common Council passed a Complete Street policy, which was at the time championed by Samantha Colosimo-Testa. A couple of years ago, the Mayor did a very small trial run of a Complete Streets redesign south of Oneida Square. They put Genesee on a "diet", meaning narrowing the traffic to a single lane in each direction, and added bike lanes and turning lanes. The City ran a survey, and the results were overwhelmingly positive. But the Council at the time shot it down. So that trial run, which the public approved of, didn't go anywhere

Now it is time to try again. On October 19th, Katie Aiello introduced a Resolution to authorize the Mayor to conduct a trial run of Complete Streets on the section of Genesee from Cottage Place to Oriskany Blvd. Frank Meola and I joined her as co-sponsors. (The section of Genesee from Oneida Square to Cottage Place is already almost a Complete Street. It became so when we changed Oneida Square into Oneida Circle.) The time is now because this section of Genesee has just been repaved and needs to be striped anyway. (The only physical change involved in this instance is to place the stripes in different places than they were before.) The Council as a whole disagreed. Some members really believed that our Resolution should go to Committee. But others (including me) argued that after years and years of debating the merits of Complete Streets, the time had come to give it a try. Councilmembers DiBrango, Betrus, Williams, and Colosimo-Testa made a motion to place the Resolution in Committee. We voted on that motion and it failed. We then moved for a vote on the Resolution itself, and it passed, 5 to 4. Again, DiBrango, Betrus, Williams, and Colosimo-Testa voted against allowing the City to move forward with Complete Streets, even as a temporary trial run.

The trial run will last for at least 90 days. So you can expect to hear more from me about this soon. To learn much more about this now, just head over to Katie's website, where she has it all mapped out. (You get it? "Mapped out"!)

You can also take the official City survey. I've provided a link to that below.

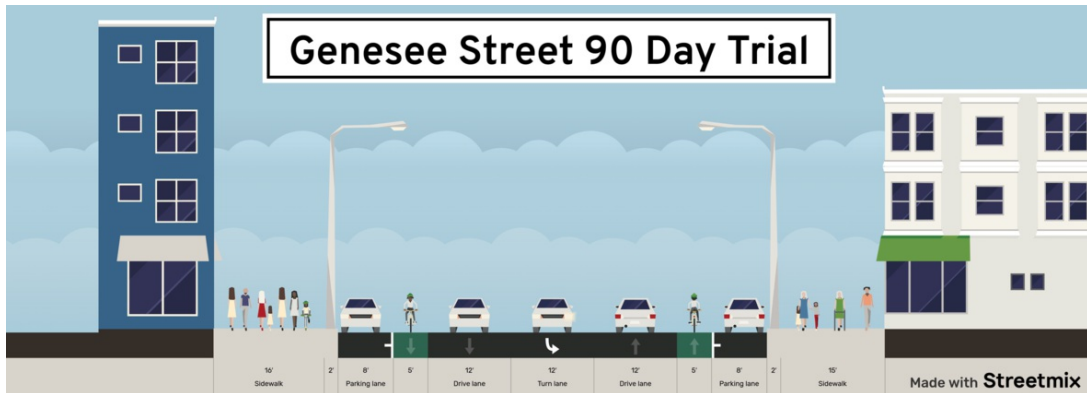


Photo: an illustration of Complete Streets on Genesee, with cars, bikes, pedestrians. Katie Aiello made this graphic for us!

[Katie Aiello's Website for Complete Streets](#)

[Take Utica's Survey on Complete Streets](#)

My Votes on the Council in October 2022

Here are all my votes in October. 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.

Resolution in Support of Workers & CSEA Local 1000 at The Utica Zoo

This was a Resolution encouraging the Administration of our beloved Utica Zoo to voluntarily enter into an arrangement with CSEA Local 1000 to represent over twenty workers at the Zoo. It was sponsored by the entire Council and passed unanimously. (See fuller description of unionization efforts above.)

A Proclamation in Appreciation to the East Utica Classic This Resolution recognized the efforts and success of the organizers of this important annual event at Valley View golf course.

E&A Transfers:

Remember - any transfers made by the Board of Estimate & Apportionment that are for \$15,000 or more must be approved by the Common Council. The following transfers were approved by the Council in October:

\$125,000 from "Restricted Fund Balance - Flood Mitigation" to "Infrastructure -

Contractual Stormwater" to account for unexpected stormwater expenses \$115,000 from "Contingency" to "Gas & Oil" for three departments
Note: we have had to make several of these transfers this year, due to the increased cost of gasoline. It is beyond time for the City of Utica to transition to electric vehicles whenever possible.

Ordinances for Various Streets:

One "Handicap Parking" sign at 1572 Baxter Ave
Stop Required at Albany St & Mason St
One way: Mason St, northbound from South St. to Albany St

Resolution for a Trial of Complete Streets on Genesee St

(See above for a full description.)

Local Law Allowing Councilmembers to Speak at Certain Meetings

(See above for a full description of this law.)

URA Properties sold:

after holding Public Hearings, we passed the necessary legislation to sell the following properties:

- 932-934 Schuyler St to Edgar Avila for \$750
- 1005 & 1009 Park Ave to Raymond Risucci for \$2,098.54
- 1201 Seymour Ave to Carlos Morquecho for \$250
- 1525 West St to Jamie Quito for \$20,000
- 1112 Stark St to Piedad Inoa for \$31,000
- 623 South St to Senad Zukic for \$57,000

Resolution for Appointment to the Mohawk Valley Regional Water Board

We reappointed Mark Ford for a three year term to the Water Board.

Help Me To Beautify Utica!

There are so many little pockets of beautiful gardens around Utica that are always in need of some attention. And I just can't drive by them without wanting to stop and pull weeds, clean things up, and so on. But I can't do it alone! I cleaned up the garden in the middle of Oneida Circle recently, once with just a couple of friends, and then with a group of volunteers from Hamilton College.

The Central New York Conservancy does a great job of tending to the Parkway and its various gardens in front of statues. And Olmsted City has its own

brigade of Volunteers who have been helping them to restore F. T. Proctor Park. But there are other little gardens that need our help too. And then there are the large planters that the City placed downtown this past Summer. I would like to have a list of people I can call on to help me now and again to clean up small gardens around the City. Want to join in? Just write a quick reply to this email, I'll add your name to my list, and then you will hear from me when I'm ready to spend a few hours cleaning something up. Signing up doesn't mean committing to anything. It just means that on occasion I will send you an email because I am looking for a few people to join me in making some little corner of Utica even more beautiful than it already is.



Photo: a group of Hamilton College students clean up the garden at Oneida Circle

Report from E&A - October 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, as well as any and all changes to the Table of Organization, which lists all employees of the City. E&A is also authorized to settle lawsuits brought against the City.

Listing every transfer we make is turning out to be very time consuming. So

from here on out, I will give a general summary of the work of E&A, and also provide a link where all of the minutes of E&A can be found.

E&A has met three times since my last Newsletter: October 3, 17, & 31. The Board has run the full gamut of its various responsibilities. We've made budgetary transfers, added positions to the Table of Organization, allocated supplemental appropriations, and authorized Corporation Counsel to make offers to settle lawsuits.

Full minutes of the Board of Estimate & Apportionment can be found at the link below.

[**Minutes for Board of Estimate & Apportionment**](#)

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**](#)

Go to SUNA and Stay Informed

The South Utica Neighborhood Association meets every month at the Parkway Rec Center. Sign up for their Newsletter so you can stay informed of what's going on in South Utica.



Photo: an image of a SUNA meeting at the Ski Chalet at the Parkway Rec Center

[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!](#)



[Web Version](#)

[Preferences](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by [Mad Mimi](#)®
A GoDaddy® company