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Councilperson Celeste Friend



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South Utica Newsletter #34 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

Even in the middle of winter, there is much to report. I hope you find this newsletter helpful and informative. Please send it along to others who might like it and ask them to sign up.

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What Will Happen to St. Elizabeth's?

Our new Wynn Hospital, after years of planning and construction, will finally open for business in October of this year. The entire operations of both St. Elizabeth's and St. Luke's will both be transferred, **in a single day**, to the new hospital downtown.

Not surprisingly, the question of what will happen to the campus at St. Elizabeth's has been very much on people's minds for the last few years. It is a very large area in South Utica, and is both centrally located on South Genesee

St, but also adjacent to some of South Utica's most beloved neighborhoods. So it is not at all surprising that what happens to that site matters deeply to people throughout Utica. I have kept my ear to the ground on this issue from at least 2020, when I first joined the Common Council.

Last year, the City hired a consultant to conduct a city-wide Housing Study. That study recommended taking advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build an entirely new neighborhood of single-family homes that would complement the neighborhoods surrounding it.

MVHS, in anticipation of Wynn Hospital opening, has been trying to sell the MVHS campus for more than a year. No developer with a plan consistent with what the City wants has responded. Now, with the big hospital transfer less than a year away, MVHS and the City have joined forces to develop a master re-use plan for the site. Together they will share the cost of hiring a consultant to develop a plan for how best to redevelop this 20+ acre site.

Here is the bulk of a recent press release from Mayor Palmieri's office:

"The City of Utica and Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS) have agreed to partner on the development of a master re-use plan for the St. Elizabeth Campus in South Utica. The City, through its Industrial Development Agency, and MVHS have agreed to share the cost of hiring a consultant team with proven expertise and competencies in the areas of urban planning, landscape architecture, market analysis, civil engineering and environmental remediation.

Through the partnership, a qualified and multi-disciplinary consultant team will be engaged to assist the City and MVHS in identifying a variety of re-use scenarios, engaging the public in reviewing and selecting preferred scenarios and detailing the steps necessary to implement the new vision for the nearly twenty-acre campus. MVHS had previously sought developers interested in purchasing the campus in its current condition, a process that was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The plan will include anticipated costs as part of the implementation plan and will recommend creative options for public financing; one element of the plan that the consultant team will be asked to undertake immediately is the development of cost estimates on the demolition of the various buildings that make up the campus, should State or Federal funding become available. Through the development of the plan, the City and MVHS share a desire to ensure land uses and development appropriate for the south Utica neighborhood. As part of their agreement, the partners have laid out several principles for the re-use, including:

- For the Genesee Street frontage, provide for a mixture of uses consistent with the Genesee Street corridor as it exists within that section of South Utica;
- For the balance of the property, provide for upscale, single-family residential development with a mix of ownership styles (attached and detached);
- Scale, style, and

architecture
reflective
of
the
surrounding
neighborhoods
and
commercial
districts."

I will continue to pay close attention to this issue and keep you informed of any developments.

Note: the **Conservation Easement**, which prevents development along the boundary between St. E's and the adjacent properties, will not be affected by any sale or subsequent development. Conservation Easements "run with the land" and will continue to prevent any future owners of the site to develop within the easement's boundaries.



Photo: an aerial photograph of the entire St. Elizabeth's campus on Genesee St in South Utica

Stewart's: Final Update

On Thursday, January 19th, the Planning Board met for the final time to review the Stewart's proposal. Twenty one people spoke, urging the Planning Board to reject Stewart's proposal to tear down a house and build a corner gas station. The Board deliberated, and then voted. Two members, George Mitchell and Joe

Caruso voted against the proposal, and the other three voted for it. Stewart's has the permission they need from the City to move ahead with the development.

Chamber Music Society of Utica

Do you know about the Chamber Music Society of Utica? It is one of the cultural gems of Utica that makes this such a rich and wonderful place to live. For more than 80 years, they have brought small chamber music ensembles to Utica, and they continue to do so. The 2022-2023 year includes five concerts, all in the Sinnot Family Auditorium at Munson-Williams. There are still three concerts coming up this Winter/Spring. Tickets are reasonably priced for these Sunday afternoon concerts. They have website, where you can learn more.



Photo: string quartet "Ulysses Quartet" will be playing at Munson-Williams on the afternoon of Sunday, February 12th

Chamber Music Society of Utica

New Crematorium at Forest Hill Cemetery

Cemeteries must be financially sustainable. For that reason, they are required

by NYS law to have "permanent maintenance funds" so that once they have sold all of their plots, there is still enough money left to take care of the cemetery. But they also must generate enough revenue to maintain their facilities even before all the plots are sold. But traditional burials are not nearly as common as they once were: more and more families choose cremation for their loved ones. So, Forest Hill Cemetery recently decided to add a crematorium to their operation. They conducted careful research and then submitted an application to the Division of Cemeteries, as well as a business plan and impact statement. Once all of that was done, they repurposed an old carriage house, so that they did not need a new building, and the new crematorium is not even noticeable. They built a state of the art facility that meets all of the most stringent codes and requirements. It is subject to regular inspection by the NYS DEC. However one may personally feel about cremation, I believe that this was a very smart choice by their Board of Trustees. I am glad to know that this beautiful old cemetery, one of Utica's historical treasures, will be sustained for generations to come.



A photo of the beautiful, ornate gate at the entrance to Forest Hill Cemetery on Oneida St. in Utica, NY.

Utica University Thursday Film Series

Jeff Miller's Thursday Film series at Utica University is back. All date and films are listed on the poster below. You can also see all the details at their website,

just by clicking below.



FILMS on THURSDAY DAY

FREE Utica University Film Series
Thursday Evenings | 7 P.M.
MacFarlane Auditorium, DePerno Hall
Utica University, 1600 Burrstone Rd., Utica, NY

Spring 2023

<p>01.19 Louis Armstrong's Black & Blues (2023, USA, dir. Sasha Jenkins, 106 mins.) This sensitive documentary about jazz progenitor and national treasure Louis Armstrong, uses archival footage and never-before-heard home recordings and personal conversations to celebrate his world-renowned music, illuminate his complex personality, and explore the nuances of his role in the Civil Rights Movement.</p>	<p>01.26 Geographies of Solitude (2022, Canada, dir. Jacquelyn Mills, 103 mins.) A joyful yet reverent experimental documentary immersing us into the rich ecosystem of Sable Island, a remote slice of land in the Northeast Atlantic where naturalist and environmentalist Zoe Lucas has lived and catalogued marine litter for over 40 years.</p>
<p>02.02 First Cow (2020, USA, dir. Kelly Reichardt, 122 mins.) Two loners in 1820's Oregon, a hired cook and an early Chinese immigrant, become partners in a lucrative business scheme that hinges on their clandestine siphoning of milk from another man's cow - the first to arrive in the territory.</p>	<p>02.09 Utama (2022, Bolivia, dir. Alejandro Loayza Girón, 87 mins.) An elderly Quechua couple who have spent their entire lives herding llamas are faced with a dilemma when an extended group of travelers their traditional way of life in this moving and gorgeously shot film set in the and highlands of Bolivia.</p>
<p>02.16 Vesper (2022, France, dir. Kristina Buozyte, Bruno Samper, 112 mins.) A compelling post-apocalyptic story about a teenage girl's struggle to survive with her father in a hostile megalopolis and must work with following the collapse of Earth's ecosystem.</p>	<p>02.23 Know Your Place (2022, USA, dir. Zia Mohajerijsbi, 118 mins.) As an African-American teen and his friend make their way across the rapidly gentrifying city of Seattle to deliver a heavy suitcase intended for an aging family member across the river to become in colony amid the ongoing redevelopment and economic displacement of the only community they've ever known as home.</p>
<p>03.02 Myanmar Diaries (2023, Myanmar, dir. Myanmar Film Collective, 70 mins.) Ten short films by ten young anonymous Burmese filmmakers, combined with haunting citizen journalism, document how Myanmar has gone from a military coup to nation-wide protests and civil disobedience, to brutal repression in which thousands of peaceful protesters are imprisoned and murdered, to a growing popular armed revolt against the brutal military junta.</p>	<p>03.09 The Quiet Girl (2022, Ireland, dir. Colm Bairéad, 94 mins.) A decade-aid poignant film - and the highest-grossing Irish-language film in history - about a neglected and withdrawn nine-year-old, the distant relatives in rural Ireland with whom she is left to spend the summer, and their painful but unspoken family secret.</p>

Free and open to the public. utica.edu/film **315.792.3092**
Schedule subject to change.

Utica University Film Series Website

Large Parcel at Genesee and Shepherd For Sale

There is a huge, single parcel of land that is bounded by Shepherd Place, Burrstone Rd, Genesee St, and Sunset Ave. Almost that entire block is one parcel owned by a local LLC. The current occupants are, Pin-o-Rama, McDonald's, Bagel Grove, and Tony's Pizzeria. There is also a large empty lot at the corner of Sunset and Shepherd. The entire block is being marketed for sale, with an asking price of \$4,900,000. In the marketing, those businesses are being included as ongoing revenue streams. No one has bought it yet, but at

least one potential developer has made inquiries at City Hall about water usage. There are rumors that a carwash will replace the Pin-o-Rama, but at this point no one has applied for such a usage, and the lot has not yet sold. Until the lot sells, and developers apply for permits from the City, there really is nothing to report. But once it does sell, and once developers do come to the City with plans, it will be very important that the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Scenic & Historic Preservation District Commission uphold their duties to carefully consider the kind of development that will be good for South Utica and for the whole City. I will keep my ear to the ground for any ongoing developments and will make sure to keep you informed.



Photo: an aerial photograph showing the boundaries of the large parcel at Shepherd Place and Genesee St

Utica Curling Club - March Open Houses

Curling is originally a Scottish sport, and at least 500 years old. Scottish and English textile workers first brought curling to the Utica area in the early nineteenth century, and the Utica Curling Club dates from 1868. It's a beguilingly simple sport that requires a great deal of finesse and care. The Utica Curling Club is always open to new curlers and members. They are holding open "Curling Nights" on Friday nights throughout March, but pre-registration is required. If you want to learn more, just visit their excellent website by clicking

on the link below. Also, they have a great restaurant from which you can watch the curling below. You need not Curl nor be a member to eat there, and the food is excellent! (They are a private club, and they do require that you show proof of vaccination to enter the club, whether you plan to play or just watch.)



Photo: people on the ice at the Utica Curling Club

[Utica Curling Club Website](#)

My Votes on the Council in January 2023

Here are all my votes in January. 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.

Ordinances for Various Streets:

- 1) We rescinded three Ordinances that prohibited "stopping, standing, or parking" in the following places: Oriskany St West between Auditorium Dr & Charles St; Whitesboro St between Charles St & Auditorium Drive; and during auditorium events Charles St between Oriskany St West and Whitesboro St
- 2) We added "No Parking at All Times" to: Whitesboro St from Auditorium Drive

to Seneca St, both North and South curb lines

3) We added "No Parking at All Times" to Broadway from Whitesboro St to Oriskany St - both East and West curb lines

Resolution Authorizing Submission of a Restore New York Project

This Resolution gives the Mayor the authority to apply for a grant from "Restore New York" to rehabilitate three connected buildings between 119 & 137 Hotel St.

Resolution Authorizing Submission of a Restore New York Project

This Resolution gives the Mayor the authority to apply for a grant from "Restore New York" to rehabilitate buildings at Harbor Point.

Resolutions for Commissioners of Deeds:

Nadine Barroncini, 1128 Westmore St, Utica NY 13501

Edita Rosic, 1601 Sulzer St, Utica NY 13501

Thalea Hunter 701 Buchanan Rd Utica NY 13502

Sherri LaSalle 1408 Sophia Ave Utica NY 13502

Joseph Furgol 1122 Jefferson Ave Utica NY 13501

Thomas Allard 9 August Dr New Hartford NY 13413 (City Marshall)

Jack Spaeth 9462 Sessions Rd Sauquoit NY 13456 (City employee)

Jennifer Goracy 77 Clinton St, Apt 44, New York Mills NY 13417 (County employee)

Michele Navedo-Bumbolo 141 Pleasant St Utica NY 13501

Ordinance Authorizing Sale and/or Disposal of Surplus City Equipment

Only the Common Council can authorize the sale or disposal of equipment that the City no longer needs. In this Ordinance, we voted to allow the sale or disposal of a vehicle lift no longer needed by our Police maintenance department and miscellaneous equipment from the I.T. Department.

Municipal Ethics Board Appointment

We voted to appoint Robert Gaetano of 1001 James St to the Ethics Board.

Proclamation Honoring the Life and Contributions of Richard Leo "Dick" Frank

This Proclamation honors Richard "Dick" Frank, who died in November 2022 and who was the first African-American member of the Utica Police Department and later the owner of "Birdland" an important jazz club in Utica in the 1960's and 1970's.

Ordinance Amending Section 2-29-346 of the Utica City Code of Ordinances

This new ordinance requires that "Neighborhood Retail" establishments be located at least 2,000 linear feet from one another.

Ordinance Amending Fees for Use of Bandshell

After discovering that we were undercharging for the use of the City-owned portable bandshell, such that we were not even covering our own labor and material expenses, we decided to increase these fees.

URA Properties sold:

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

1306 Seymour Ave to Ha Khin for \$250

1636 Dudley Ave to Omar Mohammedhafiz & Islam Mohamed for \$43,000

948 & 950 Fay St to Irene Moskal for \$250

948 & 950 Fay St to Casandra Stevens for \$250

(These two sales consolidated and reorganized properties adjacent to one another.)

714 Blandina St to Zijo Goronja for \$18,000

1106 Parker St to Mariana Garro & Dahian Berrio for \$15,000

1207 Blandina St to Aldin Zukic for \$45,000

318.42-1-1./2 Lafayette St to MVHS for \$0 (this portion of Lafayette St will now be incorporated into the campus of our new Wynn Hospital)

E&A Transfers:

Quick reminder: all and any budget line transfers of \$15,000 or more must be authorized by the Common Council

\$70,000 from Contingency to DPW Central Garage, Gas & Oil

\$55,000 within Parks Maintenance - from Wages to Seasonal Employment

\$34,325.86 from Insurance Recoveries to Parks Maintenance - Repairs

\$30,000 from Off-Street Parking Wages to Parkway Rec Center - Repairs

Report from E&A - January 2023

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 once since my last Newsletter, and may not meet again until the next year. But as always, important stuff happens at E&A, and I'll tell you all about it here. At our January 10th meeting, we voted to reimburse the cost of the Red Cross Lifeguard Certification Course for anyone who works for the City of Utica as a lifeguard in 2023. Hopefully this will help us to attract more lifeguards this coming summer.

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](#)

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.

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