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## Councilperson Celeste Friend



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## South Utica Newsletter #35 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

February is half over, so Spring is just around the corner. 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*

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

**Chamber Music Society of Utica**

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## **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.*

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## 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**

**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.

**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 NorthWest Atlantic where naturalist and environmentalist Zoe Lucas has lived and catalogued marine litter for over 40 years.

**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.

**02.09**  
**Utama**  
(2022, Bolivia, dir. Alejandro Loayza Girón, 87 mins.)  
An elderly Quacha 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.

**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.

**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.

**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 insular armed revolt against the brutal military junta.

**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.

Free and open to the public. [utica.edu/film](http://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*

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## 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](#)

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## My Votes on the Council in February 2023

Here are all my votes in February. 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:**

### **Resolutions for Commissioners of Deeds:**

Priscilla Garcia-Hodge 81 Prospect St, Utica

Mark Williamson 33 Pond Lane, Utica

**URA Properties sold:**

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

418 & 420 Mandeville St to Diana Torres for \$13,000

123 Harding Place to Eh Ka Paw for \$18,000

811 Chestnut St to Nicholas Kilev for \$8,600

923 Blandina St to Nezir Buco for \$250

1016, 1018, & portion of 1022 Park Ave to ArtSpace for \$12,500

Ordinance Authorizing the Construction and Placement of a Statue Described and Known Throughout the World as a "Sebilj"

This Ordinance will authorize the creation of a "Sebilj" to be built and placed along Culver Ave, in the large grassy area beyond the 911 Memorial, in the general vicinity between Sherman Dr and Welsh Bush Rd. These sculptures date back to the Ottoman era, and were common in the centers of cities and towns. For more information, see my description above.

Placement of an Honorary Street Sign for Mayor Charles H. Donnelly" Harbor Point Rd, will now also be known as "Mayor Charles H. Donnelly Drive" in honor of Mayor Donnelly's service to the City

Resolution Authorizing the Conveyance of Chancellor Apartments by the Municipal Housing Authority" to "Impact Utica - Chancellor/Broad LLC" The Municipal Housing Authority (now known as "People First") is going to redevelop the Chancellor Apartments on Bleeker St and is also going to redevelop a historic warehouse at 700 Broad St into 74 affordable housing units. This requires a transfer of ownership of these properties from the City to a new LLC which will operate within the Municipal Housing Authority. This Resolution authorizes the Mayor to enter into all the necessary legal agreements to transfer these properties. This Resolution passed 8 to 1. Councilmember Samantha Colosimo-Testa voted against it. She did not give a reason for her vote.

Ordinance Authorizing the Placement of a Sign Designating the Location of the Residence of the City of Utica's First Elected Mayor by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, John C. Devereux Division"

This Ordinance will permit the placement of a sign on Broad St that commemorates the original home of our first elected Mayor, John C Devereux. This was also the site of Utica's first Holy Communion.

**E&A Transfers:**

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

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## 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\*\*](#)

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## Watch Common Council Meetings Online

I've always encouraged everyone to attend Common Council meetings. We meet on the first and third Wednesdays of every month, except over the Summer, when we usually only meet once in July and once in August. The "pre-meeting" starts at 6, and the regular meeting starts at 7pm. 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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## 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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