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## Councilperson Celeste Friend



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## South Utica Newsletter #36 from Councilperson Celeste Friend

March is a busy political month in Utica, with candidates going door to door to collect signatures to help them gain access to the ballot. Do your part for democracy and please sign petitions for your favorite candidates. I hope you find all these newsletters helpful and informative. Please send it along to others who might like it and ask them to sign up.

**Sign Up for This Newsletter**

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## The New York State Empire Trail

New York has built the largest recreational trail system in the United States: the **Empire State Trail (EST)**. Completed in 2021, the EST welcomes bicyclists and hikers to explore New York State's extraordinary communities, history, art and culture. Cyclists and hikers can now safely travel west to east across NYS from Buffalo to Albany. Arriving in Albany, one can continue on the Trail north to the Canada border, or south to New York City's Battery Park. The vast majority of the Trail from Buffalo to NYC is off-road, and was routed to place it

near cultural and historical properties. By cycling east from Utica and south to NYC, one can pass through numerous communities like The Stockade in Schenectady, and visit museums like The Arkell in Canajoharie and The Olana State Historic Site near Hudson, The Hudson River Skywalk, and Historic Huguenot Street in New Paltz. These sites are merely a small sample of potential cultural sites that can be visited safely by bicycle along the EST.

The Empire State Trail is traveled by more than 8 million users each year. A 2018 study estimated that over 8 million people used the Trail, with an economic impact of approximately \$253 million in annual revenue for communities along the Trail. During the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, trail visitation surged across New York State by 20 to 50 percent, as people flocked to trails to exercise, enjoy nature, and rejuvenate their spirits. Although precise numbers are not available, visitation to the Empire State Trail is believed to be exceeding 10 million people annually.

The economic benefits to cities like Syracuse have been well documented. But Trail users bypass Utica because there is simply no easy, safe way to get from the Trail down into Utica. Lots of tourism dollars are simply passing by Utica. We need to create feeder trails and bike lanes that can connect the EST to Utica - to our downtown area, to our museums and parks and restaurants. We need to make it easy and attractive for tourists to come get coffee, get lunch, go to our museums, shop in our stores. In other words, bicycle infrastructure is one important part of economic development!



*Photo: a simple map showing the paths of the Empire Trail from Buffalo to New York City and Canada*



*Photo: two cyclists on the Empire Trail on a Fall day*

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## **Cricket Comes to Utica!**

I think we can all agree that when there is more to do in Utica, then this place will be an even happier place to live. So here is something new for Utica: cricket! Cricket is the world's second most popular sport, and is played throughout the world. It's an easy game, in that it only requires a straightforward "pitch" in a field: it requires very little equipment and just a nice flat field. The hope is that they can build a new pitch at F.T. Proctor Park.

Over the winter, the Utica Cricket Club is practicing once a month at Sangertown Square Mall, at the Blue Sox Academy (across from Dick's Sporting Goods). If you are interested in getting involved, they are always looking for new members: just call Salvatore Famolaro at 315-223-1941. Many people in Utica grew up playing cricket, which makes it a great addition to Utica!



*Photo: a batter playing cricket in a batting cage at Bluesox Academy at Sangertown Square Mall*



*Photo: Cricket is played with small, hard, leather balls.*

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## **The Utica Fire Academy**



*Photo: a collection of firefighter badges from cities around the state, whose personnel have trained with us*



*Photo - dormitory at Utica Fire Academy*



*Photo: a burn tower used for training*

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## **Another Newsletter - from Caroline Reale**

Caroline Reale (D) serves on the Oneida County Legislature. She has been representing New Hartford for the past two years. Now, in her first bid for reelection, her district has changed a little: she will now represent the Fifth Election District in the Third Ward, and the second in the Fourth. (In other words, she will now represent people in 3-5 and 4-2.) So some folks in both South and East Utica will now be represented by Reale. So if want to keep up with her on the County Leg, you can sign up for her Newsletter simply by clicking the link below, or [visiting her website](#).



*Photo: Caroline Reale and Bob Schofield at the Wynn Downtown Hospital, still under construction*

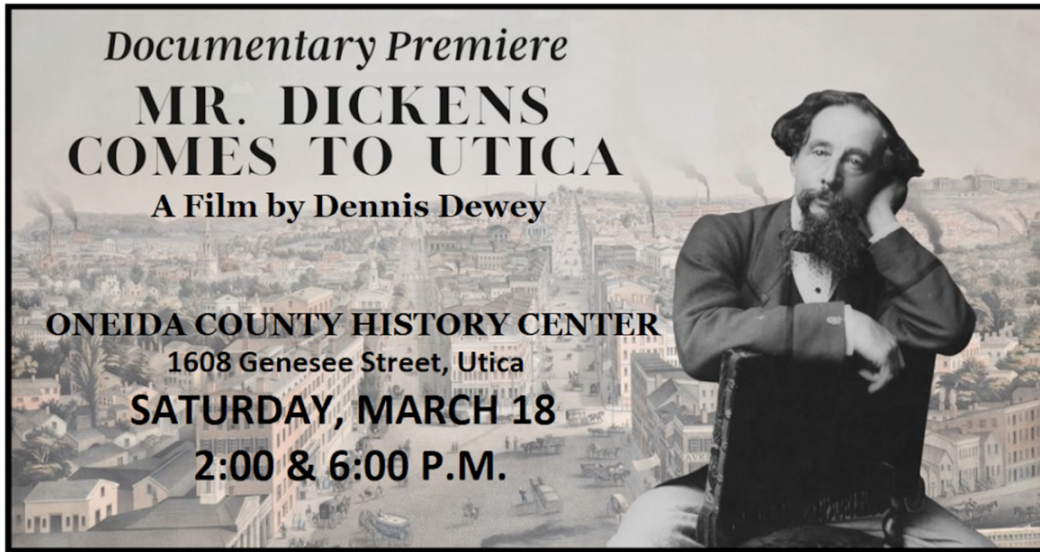
## **Caroline for Oneida County**

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## **Mr. Dickens Comes to Utica!**

In the winter of 1868 celebrity author, Charles Dickens, was on a performing tour of the Eastern United States. This new 38-minute documentary by Oneida County History Center's filmmaker and South Utica resident, Dennis Dewey,

tells the story of Dickens' accidental stay in the city of Utica on March 17-18, 1868. The film will premiere in two showings on **Saturday, March 18 at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.** Admission is **FREE**, and there will be popcorn and other refreshments. Dennis will be on hand to answer questions following the screening. **Please come and tell your friends about it, too!**



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## Love Your Sewers!

If you stop to think about it, having sewers really is one of the best things about living in a City. Sure, there's the restaurants and the culture and living amongst other people, but that doesn't mean much compared to that most basic of services: having dirty water and waste carried away from your home to be taken care of others. But that system, our sewers, need to stay well maintained in order for us to be able to think about them hardly at all. And there are some simple things you can do to keep our sewers in good shape and functioning well. Mostly that amounts to keeping certain things OUT of our sewers, so that they can effectively carry away our waste water. Here is what you should **NOT** flush:

**Fats, Oil, Grease:** These may seem like liquid when you flush them, but as they cool they congeal and clog pipes. So rather than pouring them down the drain, wait until they are warm (not hot), and pour them into a container and put that in the trash. (You can also take them to the Solid Waste facility on Wurz Ave, and dispose of them with no fee.)

**"Flushable Wipes":** These convenient wipes say that they are flushable, but they DO NOT break down, instead they clog pipes and wrap themselves around pumps and valves. So if you do decide to use them, please dispose of them in the trash.



**And More:** Also, please don't flush any sort of hazardous waste, such as paint thinner or other chemicals. Also, don't flush dental floss, prescription drugs, hygiene products, rubber or latex.

By following these few simple guidelines, we can all do our part to protect and preserve our infrastructure.



*Photo: a sewer pipe half full of congealed grease*



*Photo: a sewer worker holding a large mass of "flushable" wipes that were clogging a sewer pipe*

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## **Sale of Art from Ghana on April 15th**

Utica resident Tekeysha Hendricks recently travelled to Ghana and came back with a wonderful selection of art. She is offering these up for sale on April 15th at the Veteran's Outreach Center downtown. See below for details.



**YOU INVITED  
COME JOIN US FOR:**



- GHANIAN PAINTINGS
- GHANIAN HAND CARVED ART
- GHANIAN CHILDRENS JEWELRY/TOYS
- GHANIAN FOOD (SAMPLES)
- GHANIAN PHOTO SHOOT

**APRIL 15, 2023**

**2PM - 6PM**

**726 WASHINGTON STREET  
(VETERANS CENTER - DOWNTOWN UTICA)**

**DOOR PRIZES - EARLYBIRD SPECIALS  
- 1ST (50) PEOPLE GIVEN TICKETS TO  
WIN AUTHENTIC GHANIAN PAINTING!**

FUNDAISER -  
RECEIVE GIFT FOR DONATION  
HINT: DO YOU KNOW THE DAY OF THE  
WEEK YOU WERE BORN?



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## **My Votes on the Council in March 2023**

Here are all my votes in March. 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.

### **Ordinance Authorizing Sale And/Or Disposal of Surplus City Equipment**

This allows the City to sell or otherwise get rid of equipment we no longer use or which is too expensive to repair. The equipment comes from the DPW and Parks Department.

### **Resolutions for Commissioners of Deeds:** Why so many, you might ask?

Because we are headed into a Mayoral election year, and lots and lots of people are becoming Commissioners of Deeds in order to help their favorite candidates collect signatures on petitions.

Gina Hobika, 1104 Parkway East, Utica

Thomas Marrotta, 1828 Guelich St., Utica

David L. Testa, 1410 Mather Ave, Utica

Anthony Garmone, 1011 Parkway East, Utica

**URA Properties sold:** After holding Public Hearings, we passed the necessary legislation to sell the following properties:

500-504 Columbia St to MVHS for \$0

Parcel 318.46-1-28.1 & 1226 Capital Ave to Human Technologies Properties Corporation for \$100 (this will allow this non-profit company to build five new starter homes on this land)

1144 Dudley Ave to Erasmo Rodriguez & Karina Lizbeth for \$250

318.74-4-42.2 Johnson Square to JCTOD Outreach for \$250

767 Rutger St. & 905 Belmont Ave to Gordana Beslic for \$30,000

1649 Neilsen St to Moe Kyaw & Hla Hla Win for \$55,000

### **Ordinances for Various Streets**

No Parking at All Times RESCINDED: High Street from Addington Place to telephone pole number 3-4

No Parking at All Times RESCINDED: High Street both sides from 1529 High Street to James Street

No Parking at All Times: High Street East Side, from Addington Place to James Street

No Parking at All Times: High Street, West Side, from 1526 High Street to James Street

**Intersections Where Stop Required** in March, the Council passed many Ordinances that codify STOP signs already in place. This is a very good thing to do, and I intend to do the same thing for South Utica.

Francis St. & Plant St. - 4 way stop sign at each corner

Clementian St. & Pleasant St.

Brinkerhoff Ave & Pleasant St.

Conkling Ave & Pleasant St.

Dudley Ave & Pleasant St.

Kemble St. & Pleasant St.

Miller St. & Pleasant St.  
St. Agnes Ave & Pleasant St.  
St. Jane Ave. & Pleasant St.  
Taylor Ave. & Pleasant St.  
West St. & Pleasant St.  
Dudley Ave. & James St.  
Howard Ave. & James St.  
Miller Ave. & James St.  
St. Agnes Ave. & James St.  
St. Jane Ave. & James St.  
Sulzer Place & James St.  
Taylor Ave. & James St.  
West St. & James St.  
Arthur St & Neilsen St.  
Arthur St & Howard Ave.  
Arthur St. & Miller St.  
Square St. & Conkling Ave.  
Square St. & Seymour Ave.  
Neilson St. & Square St.

### **Resolution Authorizing Adjustment to 2022-2023 Solid Waste Service Charge**

The Common Council authorizes that certain people and businesses not be charged the usual solid waste service charge when they make other arrangements (such as dumpsters for apartment buildings).

### **Annual Estimate 2023-2024**

Budget season is upon us. The Mayor introduced his Budget to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment on February 7th, which then passed the Budget on February 13th. Now it is up to the Common Council to study it, and either accept it as is, or pass an amended version. First, we will have to hold a Public Hearing. So we passed a Resolution to hold a Public Hearing on the "Annual Estimate" on March 15th. We are required by the Charter to pass the Budget no later than March 20th. Our new fiscal year begins on April 1st.

### **E&A Transfers:**

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

\$14,000 within DPW to adjust for unexpected repairs to vehicles

\$20,000 within Fire to adjust for unexpected increases in repairs to ambulances and fire trucks

\$30,000 from Fire Line to Fire Administration for lexipol subscription

\$18,000 from DPW & Parks to Parks Maintenance for unexpected repairs at Liberty Bell Park Fountain.

\$41,000 within City Hall maintenance

\$40,000 from Parks Maintenance to Engineering - Contractual

\$24,000 within Comptroller

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

We are anticipating three retirements of firefighters within the next few months. Meanwhile, we have a new session of the Utica Fire Academy starting in just a few weeks. We need to hire new firefighters to be trained and to then replace those retiring firefighters. And we don't want to have to wait until the next session at the Fire Academy, because that won't begin until the Fall. So we have increased the Complement of the Fire Bureau temporarily, by sunsetting this law. So once the retiring firefighters in fact retire, we will be back to our current complement of 81 Firefighters.

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## **Report from E&A - March 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. Also, all transfers of \$15,000 or more must be authorized by the Common Council, so those are listed in my Council votes.

E&A has only met once since my last Newsletter. This is typical during "Budget Season", when City Hall's attention is on studying, possibly amending, and passing our Budget. E&A passed the budget on We settled one small lawsuit against the City, for \$4.500. And we authorized Corporation Counsel to hire an outside attorney to defend one of our police officers.

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.

**[Watch Common Council Live on YouTube](#)**

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