



Lewiston eclipse event essentially canceled

THE ECLIPSE
 A Step Back in Time

CANCELED

Experience Lewiston's history as day turns to night. Take a step back in time to the 1820s and the Era of Good Feelings as the village is cloaked in totality by the celestial "Ring of Fire."

LEWISTON, NEW YORK
 Monday, April 8, 2024, 2:00-4:30pm
 Center Street

Mayor: Board reversing course on closing Center Street due to safety concerns

BY JOSHUA MALONI
 GM/Managing Editor

Lewiston is losing its eclipse event.

On Wednesday, Mayor Anne Welch said the Village Board intends to reverse a prior vote permitting the partial shutdown of Center Street for what would've been an Historical Association of Lewiston-coordinated viewing party on Monday, April 8.

The municipality's main roadway would've been closed to traffic from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., from Sixth to Fourth streets, to accommodate a program titled "The Eclipse: A Step Back in Time." Activities were set to include "19th century demonstrations (turning) Center Street into an 'living history' frontier village, including metal forging, pottery making, fur trappers, Native Americans, music and dancers, candle making, cooking, military reenactors, and many other displays."

However, "After talking to the chief of police, they don't want to close down the street because they're worried that we're going to have so many people that it

would be not a good situation to have closing the street," Welch said. "So, after talking to them, the board discussed it again, and said, 'Yeah, it's probably not a good idea to have the street closed.'"

Welch said she offered alternative eclipse viewing sites, including Academy Park, Hennepin Park or the plateau off Portage Road, and suggested HAL could use the Frontier House and Apple Granny Restaurant parking lots. That said, "I think they just decided not to do it."

Community advocate Lee Simonson was spearheading the eclipse event. He stated, "There won't be any 19th century performances or displays. The mayor encouraged using Academy Park, but the volunteers felt it would be too soggy in early spring."

"What will happen? Church bells will be ringing 10 minutes before and after totality. And we hope that the businesses can turn off their exterior lights and put candles in the windows. We also hope the village turns off the street lanterns during totality."

SEE ECLIPSE, continued on Page 3

New year, new opportunities kick off new TOWN OF NIAGARA BOARD



Elected leaders are ready to get to work for their constituents.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY TIMOTHY CHIPP

Contributing Writer

Work is no longer the future for three new Town of Niagara board members.

Supervisor Sylvia Virtuoso and councilmen Michael Lee and Johnny Parks each took their oaths of office Wednesday, nearly two months after securing enough support in their general elections to claim their respective seats.

Town Justice Samuel Gatto, who left his own board seat for the job, also took his oath, as did new Town Clerk Melissa Cerillo, who took over for Virtuoso.

A full house of about 100 at the town's Calvin K. Richards Senior/Youth Activity Center witnessed the ceremonies, which had Lee and Parks both excited for the future.

"I appreciate all the residents who have faith in me," Lee said. "(The crowd) shows they care about their town and want to see it thrive."

Parks simply reiterated sentiment from after his election, saying he's "proud to be part of a great community" and that he hopes to "continue to serve the community as best as I can."

Virtuoso took a few moments before the board finalized its annual reorganization meeting to lay out the new board's priorities. This includes a focus on bringing new businesses to the town. And one in particular, she said, is finally moving forward – albeit slowly.

"Amazon's permits have been paid for," she said. "And they're going to get started in the spring."



New Town of Niagara Supervisor Sylvia Virtuoso addresses the crowd.

The future of the project that saw a drawn-out process over several months in 2022 was questioned after the corporation spent much of last year selling off and renting out its warehouse space as the economy continued a post-pandemic downturn.

Virtuoso's statement regarding the project finally gaining traction once again sent a buzz through the crowd. It's one that could provide a financial boon for the town's budget, another major challenge the board will face in the new year.

Currently operating without a townwide general tax, Niagara officials will soon watch their garbage collection prices skyrocket and several other revenue streams shrivel or dry up in the coming years, a reality that prompted previous enthusiasm for such a large project at the intersection of Packard and Lockport roads.

Marc Carpenter, who is begin-

ning his third stint as deputy supervisor under Virtuoso's lead, said he's looking forward to learning how the new faces and new voices will tackle the problems and improve upon the town he already loves.

Along with Amazon and the town's businesses, Carpenter said the board will also need to tackle some public safety issues. It's a small town by land size, but it's just one of two towns (Lewiston) in the entire county to maintain its own police force.

Other neighboring towns, more than double the size of Niagara, don't, he said.

"We have the wherewithal to have our own police force," he said. "So we want to maintain our patrols. And not just on our main streets. We want to keep them on our side streets. And it comes at a cost."

They'll task Lee, a former part-time town police officer, with serving as police commissioner, where he'll serve as a liaison between the board and Chief Craig Guiliani as issues arise.

Aside from public safety, Lee said his priorities match much of what Virtuoso has laid out in her previous statements. He'd like to see work done to cut down on dilapidated housing and to get the town's finances in order.

The board's first real opportunity to affect the town's future comes with a work session set for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at Town Hall, 7105 Lockport Road. The first regular meeting of the new year is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Jan. 16, also at Town Hall.

GEORGE'S APPLIANCE AND TELEVISION
 Serving Niagara For Over 90 Years
 1422 PINE AVE.
 Rte. 62A & 15th St., Niagara Falls, NY
 www.ShopGeorges.com • 716-282-2121

Outlet CARWASH
 Home of the NO-TOUCH WASH
 Carwash Specials
 Buy Bundles and \$AVE
 OPEN 24 HOURS
 Locally Owned and Operated
 2727 Military Rd, NF

"The greatest compliment I can receive is a referral from you!"
 (716) 531-1577
 Cvandusen@huntrealestate.com
 Working for You 24/7
Cyndi VanDusen-Roemer
 Hunt ERA
 716 Center Street • Lewiston, NY
 Your Hometown Realtor