

Virtuoso provides update on what's happening in Town of Niagara

GUEST EDITORIAL
BY SYLVIA VIRTUOSO

Town of Niagara Supervisor

First four months complete. It's been very busy; although I was familiar with everything and everyone, the job is different and needed some getting used to. Developers, employees, residents, business owners – all want to see what's next or share concerns they have had. All the curiosity seems to have calmed down and real business has begun.

I have the pleasure of meeting with developers that have great ideas, hoping they all come to fruition. I will do all I can to assist them. The employees have been great – I could not ask for a better team to work with. With two new Town Board members, it has been a learning curve, but you have the best of the best representing you and the Town of Niagara. The residents have attended meetings, called, visited with concerns, and I hope they realize we did everything possible to resolve the issues and concerns – and we will continue to always take the time to listen.

It has not all been a bed of roses. We have also been insulted and maligned on social media. That approach is not acceptable. We will not respond to that type of abuse, and neither will I allow our staff to be subjected to it. Mutual respect is a requirement in our town. I am always happy to answer a genuine question on



Sylvia Virtuoso

social media – but even then, we have phones, email and websites to get answers.

My door is always open, and I have had a ton of visitors stop in. Some are happy, some are not. I welcome them all. My main goal as supervisor is to keep our town a great place to live, work and do business.

Perhaps it's not clear to all, but sending out violation letters and informing people they must clean up and follow town code is not a punishment but a desire to keep our town to its highest standards we all deserve. Getting permits is a way the town knows the work you are performing is safe and meets all New York

state requirements.

You see, I am a small business owner, as well. My husband and I have had the great pleasure of owning a small business in the City of Niagara Falls for 43 years, and live and raise our family in the Town of Niagara. We have also lived through the demise of the city – Pine Avenue, in particular. So, with that said, I am doing my very best to not let that happen to the Town of Niagara. So, if it makes people angry to follow the rules, there are many more people happy that the rules are being enforced. Every decision we make is for the betterment of our town, not any personal preferences. It's what our predecessors made laws for – to follow.

The concerns and reality we do see: In 2026, we may be forced to contract out sanitation collection, which is very costly – we are beginning to prepare. That's the cost of doing business with the NFWB, whose contract ends this year, and we will need to negotiate once again.

The Fashion Outlets Mall occupancy is down; they provide 50% of the sales tax for Niagara County (this is where I encourage everyone, including myself, to shop in person more to support the mall).

The properties that are for sale on Military Road are not selling as quickly, with the high interest rates, and some have been vacant

way too long. The town actually does not have enough vacant land to provide what developers would like to bring to our town.

How do we keep the tax rates and water bills down? It's a struggle, as everyone knows the cost of everyday life has increased immensely – so has the cost of doing business for the town, including wages, insurance, water, sewer, paving, snow plowing, salt, general maintenance, everyday costs.

Amazon is moving along, and other developments are in progress, as well. We welcome them with open arms, but it comes with increased police, more roads will need paving, sewer lift station improvements, increased traffic – to name a few things.

I am hoping to resurrect a business association to work with, as they were such an asset to the town in the past as a liaison to the business community.

Just touching base on what I think about, and how and what we can do better – a few concerns on my mind right now.

The good news is "Music Mania Mondays" continue for all to enjoy.

"Noel @ Niagara" continues for the holidays. Plus, there's "Trash to Treasure," Mini Putt opens Memorial Day weekend, bocce and cornhole leagues, lots of fishing!

Your town employees are working harder for all your needs.

Our Police Department has had challenges never seen before, handled perfectly, and is trained and ready for anything!

Our senior program has seen a tremendous increase in participation. Tops sponsors the monthly birthdays for them, and more events to be added.

Our historian is always working on ways to keep our history alive.

The courts have streamlined to one day; the judges and their team are hard at work reorganizing.

The Highway and Water departments cleaned up right-of-way areas that haven't been touched in years. Republic assisted with the cleanup of the 190 sides, as well as NYSDOT; Niagara County took care of Lockport Road; Belden Center had its own cleanup – great job, and thank you to all.

Military Road will have the flowers, once again. Thank you to our legislators, Chris Robins and Chris McKimmie. Assemblyman Angelo Morinello has been a great supporter, too, looking into many grants, etc., for all of us. Sen. Robert Ort has also been in conversations to see where he can assist.

There is so much more to list, but I will try to keep you up to date with periodic articles.

When we all work together, great things happen!

Town of Niagara to offer 'Save Our Cemeteries' workshops

Submitted

Cemeteries are dying. What can we do to help preserve our final resting places?

This will be the primary focus of an upcoming workshop, "Save Our Cemeteries," to be held in the Town of Niagara on Saturday, July 13. Organized as part of 50th anniversary events celebrating the founding of the Western New York Genealogical Society, the "Save Our Cemeteries" program will offer a wide range of presentations and demonstrations toward preserving our cemeteries.

Hosted by WNYGS and Town of Niagara Historian Pete Ames, the event will feature programs at two nearby locations. The first session will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Calvin K. Richards Community Center located at Veterans Park, 7000 Lockport Road

near Town Hall.

Included will be presentations on family history research in cemeteries by Michelle Kratts, a Lewiston genealogist/librarian; and discussion on the importance of volunteerism by Lake View Cemetery general manager Hugh Golden and New York State Division of Cemeteries representatives Michael Catena and Cindi Craig.

The morning program will offer coffee and snacks provided by the Helping Hands outreach organization, displays, and other handouts expected by various groups. A lunch will be provided at the center from noon to 1 p.m.

The afternoon session will take place at the Witmer Cemetery, located at Witmer Road and Pennsylvania Avenue. A tour of the historic cemetery will be featured,

highlighting the results of recent restoration efforts. Also, a demonstration on the proper methods of cleaning headstones by Cheektowaga historian and cemetery volunteer Maureen Gleason; a discussion on combatting invasive species by Cornell Cooperative representative Nick Cornett; and information on the resetting and repairing of cemetery markers by local masonry expert Gary Strenkoski.

For more information or to register for the event, visit the

Western New York Genealogical Society website at <https://www.wnygs.org/>. Ames said attendance at the program would be capped at 100. He encouraged

those interested in attending to register early. For more information, he can be reached at 716-297-4429.



Lewiston Garden Club to hold perennial sale

The Lewiston Garden Club will host a perennial sale from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 18, on the grounds of the Red Brick Municipal Building, North Fourth and Onondaga streets in Lewiston.

Pictured is a scene from a past perennial sale. (Photo courtesy of the Lewiston Garden Club)

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THURS 6AM-2PM - Chicken Milanese or Fish - Haddock: Breaded-Battered-Baked
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