

## Town of Wheatfield Volunteers set to get 10% property tax break pending legislation

BY LAWRENCE J KAZNICA

A long-standing \$500 pitance given to emergency responders as compared to the ever-rising cost of property taxes in Niagara County, first responders could see a noticeable tax break very soon.

Niagara County Legislator David Godfrey, 10th legislative district, reported to the Wheatfield Town Board on Monday that a significant tax break equaling 10% of total property taxes incurred could likely take place later this year, pending county approval.

"All my fellow legislators are behind it. I feel good about this," Godfrey said. "This will increase retention and recruitment. I got \$500 a year and that is nothing."

He said COVID-19 has worn down first responders over the past two years, and noted registered EMTs are harder to find than ever.

"The county is not taking over EMS, that is very important to remember," Godfrey reminded the board. "There are legal and financial issues."

According to state estimates, volunteer first responders participation is down by more than 33% since the turn of the century, from approximately 125,000 to 75,000 across New York state.

In other board action:

- Council members heard from Town Clerk Kathy Harrington, who reminded residents the date for paying property taxes is Tuesday, Jan. 31.

- Town Assessor Kelli Coughlin reported to the board there are certain exceptions for seniors, which push the date back to March 1.

- Approved the request from Highway Superintendent Paul Siegmann for the purchase of a new Ford F-350 pickup truck for \$46,572 to be paid from the Highway Department's equipment budget.

- Approved bill payments for the general fund, \$37,426; highway fund, \$74,334; water/sewer fund, \$27,595; fire, \$29,540; lighting, \$155; refuse, \$101,398; and prepaid \$53,742.

# County readjusts income guidelines for county property tax exemptions for seniors, people with disabilities

Niagara County Legislator Rick Abbott on Monday said the Niagara County Legislature has passed two local laws to readjust the income guidelines for county property tax exemptions for seniors (65-plus) and people with disabilities, so more people can take advantage of the program – and those who are receiving the exemption do not lose them.

"The income guidelines have not been increased since 2016, which means fewer seniors and people with disabilities are able to participate," said Abbott, who sponsored the local law. "Plus, inflation has led to increased monthly Social Security payments, which, while a good thing for these folks, also means many would receive a lower property tax exemption or lose it completely."

Abbott said that, under the old guidelines, seniors making less than \$21,000 received a 50% exemption on county taxes; that is now increased to \$26,200. At the upper end, to receive a 10% exemption, the top income was \$28,500; that now increases to \$33,700. Any income over that does not receive an exemption. There are nine different percentage levels of exemption between the low and top income.

For the disability exemption, the lowest level for a 50% exemption was \$15,025; that is now increased to \$26,200, like the senior exemption. The upper limit was \$23,425 for a 5% exemption; that now increases to \$34,600. There are 10 different percentage levels of exemption between the low and top income.

"These exemptions are really about trying to help keep seniors

### Senior Exemption Chart:

	ANNUAL INCOME	EXEMPTION PERCENT
Less than:	\$26,200	50%
From:	\$26,200 to \$27,199.99	45%
	\$27,200 to \$28,199.99	40%
	\$28,200 to \$29,199.99	35%
	\$29,200 to \$30,099.99	30%
	\$30,100 to \$30,999.99	25%
	\$31,000 to \$31,899.99	20%
	\$31,900 to \$32,799.99	15%
	\$32,800 to \$33,700.00	10%

### People with Disabilities:

Annual Income	Less than:	\$Change	Exemption %
More than:			
\$ 0.00	\$26,200.00		50%
26,200	27,199.99	+\$1,000	45%
27,200	28,199.99	+2,000	40%
28,200	29,199.99	+3,000	35%
29,200	30,099.99	+3,900	30%
30,100	30,999.99	+4,800	25%
31,000	31,899.99	+5,700	20%
31,900	32,799.99	+6,600	15%
32,800	33,699.99	+7,500	10%
33,700	34,600.00	+8,400	5%
34,600			0%

Image courtesy of the Niagara County Public Information Office

and those with disabilities in their homes where many raised their families, served our community and have been the bedrock of neighborhoods for decades," Abbott said.

Those who have questions about their exemption are encour-

aged to call their town/city assessor. Those with general questions about how the exemptions work can contact the Niagara County Department of Real Taxation at 716-439-7077.

## 'Coffee with Chris' and Assemblyman Morinello

New York State Assemblyman Angelo Morinello will join Niagara County Legislator Chris Voccio at "Coffee with Chris" at 9 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 4.

"Assemblyman Morinello has vast experience as both a judge and a state legislator, and should bring an interesting perspective," Voccio said.

"Coffee with Chris" is held at Cristoforo Colombo Society at 2223 Pine Ave. Voccio brings Tim Hortons coffee.

No reservations are required. For more information, call 716-696-0086.

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1. **Hydration** is important for cellular function, so make sure you remember to drink water regularly throughout the day.
2. The **phytonutrients** in plant-based foods are essential for health and wellness for our body and mind. Eat plenty of vegetables and low-sugar fruits (like organic berries), every day.
3. **Rest** is necessary for your body to run optimally. The way to figure out how much sleep you need is to think about how much you sleep on a relaxing vacation, when you naturally fall asleep and wake up naturally without an alarm. The number of hours you get on a relaxing vacation per day is generally how much time your body is craving for sleep.
4. Take time to **have fun** with your loved ones. Social support and positive experiences have been noted in studies to be very beneficial to health.
5. Make sure to **keep your body moving** every day, even if it's just walking up and down the stairs at work or taking a noontime stroll around the block. Exercise is one of the keys to living a long, healthy life." (Excerpted from "to your Health")

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**THURS 6AM-2PM\*** - Cuban Sandwich or Fish - Battered, Breaded, Baked

**FRI 6AM-2PM** - Haddock, Fish Sandwiches, Tuna Melts & New England Clam Chowder

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