

# Niagara Gospel Mission seminar for vets

On Wednesday, the Niagara Gospel Mission invited local government leaders, veterans organizations, community groups, pastors, law enforcement and military members to take place in its first symposium on homelessness, with an emphasis on the homeless veterans in Niagara Falls, and the difficulties transitioning out of the military.

Speakers from different eras of warfighting talked about how the reception of soldiers had changed from Vietnam to now.

"We went and fought for our country and, when we got home, we got treated like the enemy by our fellow citizens and the govern-

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ment," veteran and Town of Wheatfield Supervisor Don MacSwan said. "I isolated and only wanted to hang out with other Vietnam veterans after that."

The main speaker was Joel Smith, the director of psychological health for the 914th Air Refueling Wing. He said, "Your veteran is different after war, and that's OK. The veterans that come to the Niagara Gospel Mission – just like any other veteran – are not broke; they don't need you to fix them;

they just need to be heard and understood."

Niagara Gospel Mission Director of Development John Cooper Jr. said, "The Niagara Gospel Mission is proud to host this event and bring everyone together for the purpose of helping veterans. We will not solve veteran homelessness by ourselves, we want and need the support of the community."

Pictured, from left: Assemblyman Angelo Morinello and Town of Wheatfield Supervisor Don MacSwan.



## IN THE NEWS

### Town eyes new Porter on the Lake Committee

Dec. 12 public hearing to discuss idea

#### STAFF REPORTS

The Town of Porter announced it would hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 12, at Town Hall regarding formation of a new Porter on the Lake Committee. To be comprised of local residents, the group's purpose will be to assist the town in its oversight of Porter on the Lake Town Park and other park areas in Porter.

The announcement follows action taken at the Porter Town Board's Oct. 11 meeting where discussion focused on creating such a group to assist the town on its planning and objectives on parks operations and improvements. Councilman Larry White, who serves as board liaison on POTL matters, commented on the need for resident involvement to help the steer the town on better utilizing the park, planning its activities and helping to oversee improvements.

White said that much of that responsibility currently falls to Su-

pervisor John "Duffy" Johnston, and that a new citizens committee could be helpful to the board in determining park needs now and down the road.

"It will help us manage park activities and plan for its future," White said

At its Oct. 11 session, the Town Board approved a resolution to establish such a committee.

"It is desirable to establish a committee in the Town of Porter government that is responsible on an ongoing basis for examining the stewardship of the Town's parks system and for determining whether residents' needs are being met by the Town's parks and open spaces," the resolution read.

Expected to consist of nine members appointed by the Town Board, the committee would include a chair and vice chair. It also would have a line item on the town budget to cover related expenses – though members will not be compensated.

The committee would assist the supervisor and Town Board on a number of areas concerning town parklands, such as POTL, the town's improved lakeside areas, cemeteries and open spaces in the town. Members would also make recommendations to the board and Department of Public Works on improvements and projects.

The resolution continued, "All significant issues involving parks or open spaces that come before any branch of Town government may be referred to the Committee for review and recommendation before they are approved."

Following the Dec. 12 public hearing, the board is expected to establish a local law intended "to formalize a body that can look for ideas/funding."

Residents are welcome to attend the session and offer comments. For more information, visit [www.townofporter.net](http://www.townofporter.net).

### City Hall Safety and Security Committee formed in North Tonawanda

Mayor Austin Tylec and Police Chief Keith Glass have established a committee to comprehensively investigate and assess the safety and security at City Hall located on Payne Avenue in North Tonawanda.

"When North Tonawanda City Hall was constructed in the early 1930s, design for safety and security was not a priority as much as it is today," Glass said. "We realize our shortcomings and have formed the safety and security committee to explore ideas to keep residents and employees safe while minimizing

financial impact."

The new committee will consist of Tylec; four members of the NTPD, including Glass; a member from the New York State Courts system; city engineers; and the city's building inspector. In addition to assessing issues, the committee will determine best practices and find ways to implement solutions to any gaps in security, while exploring grant opportunities for these enhancements.

"Public spaces throughout our nation have been hit with unforeseeable tragedies, and the City

of North Tonawanda wants to be proactive with the safety of our employees and visitors who occupy City Hall on a daily basis," Tylec said.

The team will be tasked with compiling areas of concern, working on preventive solutions, tackling issues such as fortifying a building with City Hall's unique layout, and reviewing protocols for emergency situations.

All questions may be directed to the committee chairman, Lt. Muehlbauer at [JMuehlbauer@NTPolice.com](mailto:JMuehlbauer@NTPolice.com).

### Federal government delaying enforcement of REAL ID requirements for 2 more years

Niagara County Clerk Joseph A. Jastrzemski on Tuesday said the federal Department of Homeland Security is delaying enforcement of REAL ID requirements by 24 months, from May 3, 2023, to May 7, 2025. At that time, one will need a REAL ID to board any domestic flights, enter a military base and access certain federal facilities.

"We were not expecting DHS to further extend the deadline, but apparently they remain concerned about backlogs in pro-

cessing driver's licenses across the country, due to the pandemic – though here in Niagara County we do not have any such backlog," Jastrzemski said. "Therefore, any class of New York drivers' license will allow you to continue to board a flight until May of 2025."

Jastrzemski said people should be mindful of the new deadline – especially if their driver's license is set to expire at some point in the next two years. New Yorkers can choose between a REAL ID

license, enhanced driver's license or a passport to meet the federal requirements.

Residents do still need a passport to fly to other countries.

Jastrzemski said residents can visit <https://dmv.ny.gov/get-enhanced-or-real-id> to learn more about the different ID options. Those interested in a passport can obtain one through the Niagara County Clerk's Office. Learn more about passport requirements at <https://tinyurl.com/cnvjzwpk>.



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