

Business is booming in Niagara County

This week, I had the pleasure of listening to my colleague, Legislator Rich Andres (chairman of the Economic Development Committee) and our Economic Development Commissioner Mike Casale deliver their annual report to the County Legislature. I am very happy to say there are a lot of positives included in the 2023 economic development address, and you are welcome to watch the video that highlights many of our successes - and puts a spotlight on different programs - at this link: <https://youtu.be/tkqNLJCMv1k>.

As regular readers of this column know, I think very highly of the dedicated team we have at our Center for Economic Development. Still, I was impressed with the breadth of programs available to both businesses thinking of locating here, or existing businesses



Becky Wydysch
Chairwoman

looking to invest and expand. Here is just an example of some the facts and figures that were shared with us last night:

- Façade program:** \$5.2 million has been granted to 203 businesses, with an estimated economic impact of over \$13.3 million.

- COVID-19 relief:** \$1.4 million granted to 33 projects in every municipality, with 206 jobs retained and 54 new jobs created.

- Business assistance:** \$330,000 in Micro Assistance for 11 projects. An additional \$1.1 million in grants has been obtained for business expansion efforts.

- Retention efforts:** Contacted 73 companies, including 53 meetings with 44 companies, including the planning of 15 projects.

- Brownfield program:** \$3.9 million in federal grant awards received. Conducted ESAs on 39 sites and completed cleanup on three.

- Empower Niagara:** V.P.C. Fiberglass has invested \$1.1 million, retained 38 jobs and created six new jobs. Currently, nine other customers of the program have invested over \$47 million.

- Marketing materials:** 17 ads executed in 2022, including a targeted effort to Canadian businesses.

- Workshops:** Conducted three workshops with a record 123 total participants, with an additional 92 attendees to the agribusiness forum.

- Cataract Funding:**

\$1,196,700 approved in new Cataract Funding grant requests in 2022 which supports tourism-based efforts.

- IDA incentives:** Assisted 10 projects totaling over \$89 million in capital investment, with 252 jobs retained and 90 new jobs created.

- NORLIC (Land Bank):** five homes acquired, received \$150,000 in grants and marketing properties to recoup \$1.4 million back to the tax rolls. Also just received an additional \$1 million grant to continue its revitalization efforts.

- Sportsfishing:** Hosted over 20 media visits and reached 5.6 million households on TV. Bassmaster Magazine ranked Niagara as the eighth best "bass lake" in the United States.

By any measure, this was indeed a busy year, and I'm happy to say we continue moving forward. Some of the initia-

tives currently on the docket include completing a master site development plan for a new 60-acre business park in the Town of Cambria; continuing our aggressive efforts in brownfield assessment, remediation and development; and releasing a market and economic analysis for a meat-processing facility, addressing one of the recommendations identified in the latest Niagara County Ag and Farmland Protection Plan.

One final note, our Center for Economic Development sends out a regular e-newsletter to several thousand businesses that keep them informed of upcoming events and provides information on many of their programs and incentives, like those listed above. If you would like to be added to that mailing list, go here to sign up: <https://www.niagaracountybusiness.com/newsletter-sign-up>.

Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce: Growing Business & Community

Observing Small Business Week, and planning for the future

Sunday is the start of National Small Business Week. Since 1963, the president of the United States has issued a proclamation announcing National Small Business Week. The week is set aside to recognize contributions of America's entrepreneurs and small business owners.

The Chamber would simply not exist without the support and involvement of its member small businesses. We sincerely thank you for turning on the lights every day, driving innovation, economic growth and development of communities across the region.

The Chamber will celebrate our members throughout the week with the unveiling of our

new logo, name, and launching several new initiatives that will start throughout the month of May. Our new community app will be launched, featuring local businesses and things to do. We will have a new website that will cater to both our member businesses and tourist information. In cooperation with Meranto Media, we will launch a new podcast!

The unveiling of our new logo and name will take place midweek first to our board members, Stakeholder, Leader, Growth and Main Street members, as well as local community and elected leaders. We are excited to move into this new strategic direction. Our board of

directors is putting in the work to fulfill a strategic plan that will grow this region over the next three years.

The Chamber today is different than the Chamber that was formed in 2005 and it was time for a change. Will everyone have an opinion? Yes. Some will love it and some will not, but we are growing in a way that will serve our members and the community in new ways.

Throughout the week, there are several ways you can help

support the businesses in our region:

- Follow the business on social media. Find out what they are doing, what their culture is, what their mission is! A lot of businesses are building communities in their online spaces, offering special promotions and insider info!

- Tell others about the businesses you love! Your influence can be contagious!

- Take that influence to the next level and write a positive review on a review site. This informs others about the positive service you have received and can encourage a future sale.

- Stop in and introduce yourself! Build connections with the

businesses in your community.

- Support local everything. This is important to keep our communities thriving. Money spent in our communities stays there.

Throughout the next few weeks, you will notice our new name, website handle, social media changes, etc. Thank you in advance for being patient with us as we complete the entire changeover. It's been hard keeping this a secret, and a little overwhelming when we think of everything we have to change over! For now – stay up to date on all things Chamber at www.NiagaraRiverRegion.com.

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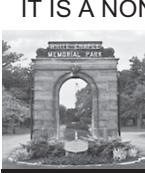
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* * * ELECTION 2023 * * *

Sirianni seeks election to Town of Niagara highway superintendent position

By Richard Sirianni

Town of Niagara Councilman Richard Sirianni recently announced he is seeking the position of Town of Niagara highway superintendent, a position being vacated by incumbent Bob Herman.

Sirianni, a longtime council member and Niagara Wheatfield School Board member, is unanimously endorsed by the Republican, Conservative, Democrat and Working Family parties.

"Bob Herman and his entire staff have done an excellent job," Sirianni said. "I know there are very big shoes to fill. Bob was a dedicated and well-respected public servant, and I will do my best to carry on his high standards."

Earlier this year, Herman announced his retirement from the highway superintendent's office after 12 years of service. This has created a vacancy in the elected position.

"The only way this is possible is if Bob felt his tenure has reached its conclusion," Sirianni said. "His retirement has brought on a unique opportunity for me to continue to work hard for our community. I look forward to the challenge in all areas of this position, especially with continued success in paving, plowing and salting our roads."

As a member of the Town Board the last several years, Sirianni has continued to support and advocate for better infrastructure. There is always work to be done though, Sirianni quipped.

"A highway superintendent's job is never com-



plete, as can be seen in making sure sewer and flooding issues are addressed, as well as have a program to continue to fix and repave our roads in our town," Sirianni said. "It can be a thankless job most times, but I believe all of our town workers continue to do an excellent job whenever and wherever they are asked."

Throughout his tenure in public service, Sirianni is no stranger to being an advocate for the town residents,

working on multimillion-dollar budgets, or ensuring resources are leveraged to result in a favorable use.

Some of Sirianni's past and present experiences include overseeing an \$80 million budget on the Niagara Wheatfield School Board, serving on the school district's audit and policy committees, a seven-year member of the Town of Niagara Town Board, and even a four-year president and financial officer of the Niagara Wheatfield Federal Credit Union board of directors, among various leadership positions in the Steelworkers International Union.

"I believe my background proves to be an asset for this community. My experiences have helped developed me to better serve our great town," Sirianni said. "Not many people can say they are a longtime union member and a strong advocate for our Second Amendment. It brings balance to the position that involves many unique responsibilities."

Sirianni is running unopposed in the Nov. 7 general election, in large part due to the unanimous support he continues to receive from every political party.