

Artpark among recipients of \$5.47M grant from Ralph Wilson Foundation

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Friday announced \$5.47 million in grants from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to support improvements to trails in three state parks in Western New York. The grants will leverage \$22.8 million total investment – including \$8 million from New York Power Authority and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – and make key upgrades to trails in Artpark State Park in Niagara County; extend Allegany State Park's Quaker Area Multi-Use Trail in Cattaraugus County; and improve the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park in Allegany County.

Artpark State Park Connector Trails

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, created after the 2014 death of Wilson, the former owner of the Buffalo Bills and a cofounder of the American Football League, along with State Parks and the New York Power Authority will fund a \$9 million comprehensive trail project in Artpark State Park. When complete, the park will be better connected to the Village of Lewiston and the existing trails of the Lower Niagara River Region.

Each entity will provide \$3 million to establish a series of formal trails that connect the Shoreline Trail to the Lower Niagara River trail system that connects from the Village of Lewiston north to Fort Niagara and westward. Elements of the Artpark project include:

- √ Installing gateways at the Portage and South Fourth Street entrances to the park to create a more appropriate sense of arrival and assist with circulation;

- √ Improving the signature "Redbrick Path" running through the park;

- √ Creating a sloped switchback trail that connects the Shoreline Trail to the upper Artpark parking area. This includes a direct scramble that will create an adventurous climb to the overlook on the escarpment;

- √ Transforming the existing South Fourth street parking lot into a sustainable parking area and multipurpose space;

- √ Improving the Artpark gorge trail system, including a pedestrian bridge ravine crossing.

The Artpark projects come as a plan to expand the Lower Niagara River Trail network is being pre-

pared for release this spring. The report, also funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, was developed by the Niagara River Greenway Commission, which has led work to find ways to create safer, off-road connections north toward Old Fort Niagara State Historic Site, south toward Niagara Falls, and westward to the Village of Lewiston.

Work on the Artpark trails will begin in January 2023 and be completed by fall 2023.

New York Power Authority Chairman John R. Koelmel said, "NYPAA has been a big supporter of Artpark for many years and is pleased to contribute to the Artpark trails improvement project. These collaborative efforts will help expand the vision for Artpark while complementing the Niagara River Greenway Commission's focus on the unique natural, cultural, recreational and scenic heritage of the Niagara gorge corridor. By creating connections among the area's important landmarks, the trails will help seed economic opportunities for the region, and ensure Artpark's place as a regional destination for living culture."

Lewiston Dems honor Chris Borgatti



Town of Lewiston Councilman John Jacoby, left, is shown with Chris Borgatti, chair of the Niagara County Democratic Committee, at a reception Sunday honoring Borgatti as the 2022 Lewiston Democrat of the Year. The Lewiston Democratic Committee presented the event.

Borgatti, who assumed the chairman's position last year, was recognized for "his dedication and service to the Democratic Party, both in Lewiston and across New York state."

The celebration at the Niagara Frontier Country Club included a number of county Democratic officials in attendance and featured remarks by newly elected North Tonawanda Mayor Austin Tylec. (Submitted photo)

'In the Loop': Lew-Port proposes \$53M budget

BY DANIELLE MULLEN
Lewiston-Porter Board of Education President

We are definitely in the home stretch of the 2021-22 school year now! Hopefully everyone had a restful and relaxing spring break and is ready to tackle these last eight weeks. There is so much to look forward to with more traditional events taking place across all grade levels for the first time since March 2020.

The Board of Education held its regular meeting this past week on Monday. The next couple of weeks will be very busy with events leading up to the annual school district meeting and vote.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Casseri will host a District Key Communicators meeting on Monday. This meeting is focused on key budget information and will also provide an opportunity for the school board candidates to introduce themselves to this group.

On Monday, May 9, a "Meet the Candidates" night will be held at the Board of Education work session. This is a great collaboration with the high school social studies department, the PTSA and the Board of Education. High school social studies students will have the opportunity to ask the candidates questions regarding a wide variety of issues related to the operation of the school district. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend to learn more about each of the candidates and why they chose to pursue this volun-

teer position.

There are four candidates running for three open seats this year. Incumbents Anika Fetzner and April Saks are joined on the ballot by Chuck Barber and Savana Bevacqua. All three open seats are for three-year terms. More detailed information about these candidates can be found on the district website, www.lew-port.com, under Board of Education/Annual Budget Vote and Election.

The Board of Education is respectfully requesting the community's consideration and support for next year's proposed budget of \$53,117,589. This 2022-23 proposed plan represents a 3.75% increase from last year's budget and a 2.69% increase in the tax levy. This increase in the tax levy is well below the Consumer Price Index and below the New York tax cap threshold for individual school districts.

Budget planning sessions were focused on consideration of the importance of continuing to offer all of the programs and services the Lew-Port community expects and relies on at our school district. The proposed budget continues support of Lewiston-Porter's extensive academic programs at all levels, its art and music

programs, the district's athletic programs and also Lew-Port's Community Education program, which has been a great way to connect our community to our schools more deeply.

The proposed budget also allows for continued development and implementation of social-emotional programming. This programming has been so crucial to the Lew-Port school community and will continue to be to ensure everyone's well being is a priority allowing academic achievement to follow. This budget reflects careful and conservative fiscal planning while being mindful of our residents and taxpayers.

The budget vote and Board of Education election will take place from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 17, in the Community Resource Center, multipurpose room. If you would like to request an absentee ballot application, please contact Marisa I. Barile, district clerk, at 716-286-7266 or by email at mbarile@lew-port.com.

Please be on the lookout for the newest edition of the district Link, which will hit mailboxes this week. The Link contains information about the Board of Education candidates and extensive information about the budget vote.

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