

North Tonawanda bans smoking in public parks; enters into agreement on Empire State Trail Project

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

Visitors to North Tonawanda parks will be able to breathe a little easier as a recent resolution has banned smoking throughout numerous city parks.

The resolution clarifies that, "Smoking a cigarette, pipe, cigar, electronic cigarette, electronic cigar, electronic cigarillo, electronic pipe, vape pen any cartridge or other component of the device or related product or any other matter of substance which contains tobacco, nicotine, any illegal substance or any other substance that is similar shall be prohibited." The law will be in effect at all times on the grounds of North Tonawanda City Parks.

The resolution cited a number of overall benefits for the ban, including a reduction in health risks from exposure to second-

hand smoke and/or e-cigarette aerosol, especially among children and those with chronic conditions. It also notes environmental impacts by protecting against litter and fires, while helping to preserve green spaces and animal habitats.

This ban is also expected to save the city money by decreasing clean-up costs. The resolution notes cigarette butts contribute to one-third of all litter collected.

On Tuesday, the Common Council approved a resolution to order a total of 77 "No Smoking/Vaping" signs to inform and remind park guests of the new regulations. The signs come at no cost to the city and will be covered by CHANT (Community Health Alliance of North Tonawanda) and the Tobacco Free Coalition of Erie and Niagara County.

Signs will be placed on the property entrances at an appropriate location and public restrooms.

Alderman-at-Large Robert Pecoraro, who helped spearhead the initiative, called the ban a "good starting point." He said he believed the ban should be implemented throughout Niagara County. Pecoraro also said the move was important to help curb smoking habits in future generations.

"There's a lot of people out there who think our youth of today don't really look up to adults and really follow them, but they do," Pecoraro said. "So, I was old-school (and) really think that we have to set the example and move forward with that, and (the two coalitions) applauded (the council's) efforts to do that."

The resolution was passed with unanimous support from council

members last month.

DOT Bike Path Connection

City officials entered into an intermunicipal agreement with the City of Tonawanda for work relating to the New York State Department of Transportation bike path connection to the Empire State Trail Project.

This will include bike lane pavement markings installed on Renaissance Bridge between the cities of North Tonawanda and Tonawanda.

City Engineer Chelsea Spahr said the intermunicipal agreement is needed as part of the grant funding.

The project is financed by NYS-DOT, East Hill Foundation, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and the Niagara River Greenway Fund Committee. Funds will go to the construction of a new paved

bike/pedestrian trail between the existing Riverwalk Trail and the Empire State Trail, resurfacing the existing trail from the southern terminus to Gratwick Park, and landscaping enhancements along the entire trail.

The Empire State Trail was announced by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2017 as a 750-mile-long stretch of bicycle and hiking trail that will span New York, from Buffalo to Albany, and from New York City through the Hudson and Champlain valleys to Canada.

The work is scheduled to occur between the months of April and October 2021. The bike path connection is expected to have a useful life of 20 years from the expected date of completion. The intermunicipal agreement will have a 20-year term to coincide with that expectancy.

Niagara County DOH to offer drive-thru rabies clinic in NT

The Niagara County Department of Health announced plans for a no cost, drive-thru rabies clinic from 1-4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, at the North Tonawanda Department of Public Works, 758 Erie Ave. The clinic will be available by appointment only.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department of Health has instituted additional safety protocols.

"In order to maintain social distancing and manage crowds that would typically arrive at a rabies clinic, certain new protocols are being established to protect both the workers and the public from possible asymptomatic (infectious, yet symptom-free) persons," said Scott Ecker, associate supervising public health engineer.



Preregistration is required and will open at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 7, with appointments taken online at [https://www.niagara-](https://www.niagara-county.com/health/Services/Environmental-Health/Rabies/Rabies-Clinic)

[county.com/health/Services/Environmental-Health/Rabies/Rabies-Clinic](https://www.niagara-county.com/health/Services/Environmental-Health/Rabies/Rabies-Clinic). Once all appointment slots are filled, registration

will close and no additional appointments will be accepted.

The Department of Health said a preregistration form must be completed regarding one's pet's information. Proof of prior vaccination must be provided via email to qualify for a three-year vaccination, otherwise a one-year vaccination will be issued.

Those arriving by car are requested to remain in their vehicle while awaiting instructions. Face masks are required for all visitors.

"Department staff will be utilizing these measures to ensure community safety while still providing essential animal vaccination services for dogs, cats and ferrets, Public Health Director Daniel Stapleton said. "Animal rabies continues to be a serious

public health concern in Niagara County. Rabies is a viral disease that nearly always results in death of the animal that is not adequately protected with a rabies vaccination. Ideally, a pet owner utilizes their veterinary office near them to receive these services. These rabies clinics are intended to bridge the gap for pet owners who have had difficulty scheduling a routine check-up for their pet with their veterinarian."

For more information, visit <https://www.niagaracounty.com/health/Services/Environmental-Health/Rabies/Rabies-Clinic>. Visitors may also call 439-7490 to have a staff member help with registration.

Niagara Falls: 'Candy Cane Story Lane' at Prospect Park boasts fun for families

Niagara University's Levesque Institute for Civic Engagement has teamed up with New York State Parks and other community partners to transform the sidewalk in front of the Visitor's Center in Prospect Park into "Candy Cane Story Lane." From Dec. 2-31, children and their families can take a self-guided stroll along the path to read Gregg and Evan Spiridellis' charming story "Are You Grumpy Santa?" On the first three Saturdays, Dec. 5-19, from noon to 2 p.m., those who also complete a quick story survey following their tour can enjoy free hot cocoa, compliments of Delaware North.

"The Levesque Institute is happy to collaborate with our community partners to sponsor this outdoor fun, free, family activity in the beautifully holiday decorated New York State Park," said

Patricia Wrobel, executive director of the Levesque Institute.

"This year, it is more important than ever to provide safe, outdoor activities to celebrate the season, and Niagara Falls State Park and our partner Delaware North are happy to be partnering with Niagara University to present the first 'Candy Cane Story Lane.' We welcome all families to come and enjoy the park, and thank NU for bringing this experience to the park," said Angela P. Berti,

spokesperson for Niagara Falls State Park.

Parking will be free on Dec. 5, 12 and 19 and, for those looking to add on to their visit, free loaner snowshoes will be available at the Cave of the Winds pavilion and the Cave of the Winds winter experience will be open (weather permitting).

The Health Foundation of Western and Central New York and CCNY Inc. are also sponsors of "Candy Cane Story Lane."

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