

Town of Lewiston kicks off 2022 with reorg session

Town Senior Center to reopen Tuesday

BY TERRY DUFFY
Editor-in-Chief

The Town of Lewiston kicked off business for 2022 Monday with its reorganization meeting in the midst of COVID-19.

The session saw the return of Supervisor Steve Broderick who was ill. It was held via Zoom as the town continues its coronavirus precautions.

"Now we'll move on to the reorganization meeting," Broderick said. "This is a tedious process. I've personally been out of the office for the last week-and-a-half with COVID; same thing for my partner, Rob Morreale."

The reorg session itself featured a vast number of approvals, appointments, confirmations and the like. Highlights include:

- The Town Board meeting schedule includes work sessions at 6 p.m. on the following Mondays: Feb. 14, March 14, April 11 and May 9. As has been the practice in past years, no work sessions will take place during June, July or August. Work sessions will continue Sept. 12, Thursday, Sept. 14, Nov. 14 and Dec. 12.

Regular meetings will take place at 6 p.m. Mondays, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, March 28, April 25, May 23, June 27, July 25, Aug. 22, Sept. 26, Oct. 24, Nov. 28 and Dec. 29 (the town's final audit).

- The town's holiday schedule includes: Feb. 21, President's Day; April 15, Good Friday; May 30-31, Memorial Day; July 4, Independence Day; Sept. 5, Labor Day; Oct. 10, Indigenous Peoples Day; Nov. 11, Veterans Day; Nov. 24-25, Thanksgiving; and Dec. 25-26, Christmas.

- The town designated the Niagara Gazette and the Tribune-Sentinel as its official/secondary newspapers for 2022, and KeyBank as the official town depository.

- The board announced the 2022 Association of Towns meetings, typically held in New York City, are canceled for this year and will take place virtually. Broderick will serve as the delegate and Councilman Bill Geiben as the alternate.

- Broderick announced Town Board liaison appointments would be the same as 2021, with the only change being Morreale assuming the liaison responsibilities held earlier by Al Bax, a former board member who was appointed as town attorney.

- Broderick and Councilman John Jacoby will serve as liaison for town/village police operations.

For more information and updates, visit the town's website, www.townoflewiston.us.

- Moving to confirmations/appointments, the board approved Bax as town attorney and Seaman Norris as attorney for the town for 2022. Other approvals include: Linda Johnson, town assessor; Tim Masters, building inspector/SEQR compliance officer; Chris McAuliffe, code enforcement officer/storm water manager; Engineering Services, GHD Consulting Services Inc.; Les Myers, fire prevention chair; Pat Martin and Don Consentino, fire inspectors; Brian Christman, deputy highway superintendent; Marjorie Maggard, town historian; Dave Trane, parks superintendent; Frank Previte, police chief; and Melinda Olick, senior services director.

- In supervisor's confirmations, William Conrad was appointed as deputy town supervisor; Amy Smith, confidential secretary; Jacqueline Agnello, finance director; John Walker, junior accountant, part-time; Connie Myer, grants consultant; and Drescher & Malceki LLP, town auditor.

- Broderick announced the town is reviewing applications for the open town recreation director position. Nicole Short will serve as secretary for the Recreation Department.

For more information on 2022 appointments to the town Cable Commission, Environmental Commission, Board of Ethics, Historic Preservation, Library board of trustees, Lighting Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, Personnel Committee, Signage Committee, Town Hall Renovations Board and Zoning Board Appeals, visit www.townoflewiston.us.

Wrapping Up

- Geiben announced the Lewiston Senior Center, which has been closed due to COVID-19, would reopen on Tuesday, Jan. 18. Geiben also said the Lewiston Family Ice Rink is now closed following a successful holiday season. Cleanup continues at Academy Park.

- Jacoby announced Brett Rogers was named as a part-time officer with the Lewiston Police Department.

- Morreale announced the town would hold a public hearing at 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 14, to consider a final plat for the Briar Oak Estates Perry subdivision.

Niagara County clerk reminds pistol permitholders to recertify

Niagara County Clerk Joseph A. Jastrzemski on Monday reminded pistol permitholders that, under the New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act (SAFE) of Jan. 15, 2013, they must recertify every five years with the New York State Police. That means those who either received their permit or recertified in 2017 must now recertify by the date of issuance on their permit.

"Regardless of how many of us feel about the SAFE Act, it is the law and so I do not want to see any law-abiding pistol permitholders put their permits in jeopardy by failing to recertify," Jastrzemski said. "And if anyone from previous years has forgotten to recertify, they should do so immediately."

Jastrzemski said those who need to recertify should go to the State Police recertification website at <https://safeact.ny.gov/pistol-permit-recertification>.

"While in a typical year there may be around 1,500 to 2,000 permitholders in Niagara County who need to recertify, this particular year catches all gun owners prior the SAFE Act being enacted, meaning there are more than 10 times the usual number," Jastrzemski said. "The State Police did inform my office that the online system has seen a significant amount of traffic, so permitholders may want to consider recertifying during off times – perhaps early in the morning or later in the evening."

Jastrzemski said those who may have problems with the online certification can download a form from the site and mail it into the State Police. He recommended those who choose this option do so via certified mail. He noted that those issued permits after 2017, or who already recertified less than five years ago, should not attempt to recertify early.

"I remind the public that the Niagara County Pistol Permit Office does not have any role in the certification process nor access to the state system; so if you call our office about recertification, you will be directed to the state police website," Jastrzemski said.

Red Cross: National blood crisis may put patients at risk

The American Red Cross is facing a national blood crisis – its worst blood shortage in more than a decade. Dangerously low blood supply levels are posing a concerning risk to patient care and forcing doctors to make difficult decisions about who receives blood transfusions and who will need to wait until more becomes available.

Blood and platelet donations are critically needed to help prevent further delays in vital medical treatments, and donors of all

blood types – especially type O – are urged to make an appointment now to give in the weeks ahead.

In recent weeks, the Red Cross had less than a one-day supply of critical blood types and has had to limit blood product distributions to hospitals. At times, as much as one-quarter of hospital blood needs are not being met.

The Red Cross continues to confront relentless challenges due to COVID-19, including about a 10% overall decline in the number of people donating blood as well as

ongoing blood drive cancellations and staffing limitations. Additionally, the pandemic has contributed to a 62% drop in blood drives at schools and colleges.

Over the next month, about 66% of donation appointments remain unfilled in the Western New York Red Cross region. Make an appointment to give blood or platelets as soon as possible by using the Red Cross blood donor app, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

DiNapoli: School district tax levy cap at 2%

For the first time since 2019, property tax levy growth for school districts will be capped at 2%, up from 1.23% last year, according to data released Wednesday by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

The tax cap, which first applied to local governments and school districts in 2012, limits annual tax levy increases to the lesser of the rate of inflation or 2%. School districts may override the cap with 60% voter approval of their budget. DiNapoli's office calculated the inflation factor at 4.7% for those with a June 30, 2023, fiscal year end.

"School district and municipal officials must remain fiscally cautious to stay under the cap as they prepare their budgets," DiNapoli said. "Even with significant funding from the state

and federal governments, school and local communities are faced with the rapid increase in inflation, pandemic surge, and trying to retain and recruit employees."

The 2% levy limit affects the tax cap calculations for 676 school districts and 10 cities with fiscal years starting July 1, 2022, including the "Big Four" cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers.

Find a list of allowable tax levy growth factors for all local governments at "Property Tax Cap: Inflation and Allowable Levy Growth Factors."

Track state and local government spending at Open Book New York. Under DiNapoli's open data initiative, search millions of state and local government financial records, track state contracts, and find commonly requested data.

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