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## NT Common Council

# Davignon retires; Belmont Housing Resources For WNY to help with foreclosure prevention outreach

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

At Tuesday's North Tonawanda Common Council meeting, city officials bid a congratulatory farewell to Superintendent of Water, Wastewater & Water Distribution Bill Davignon, who is set to retire this week. Davignon had worked at the plant for over 30 years and was appointed the supervisor role in 2016 by the Mayor Arthur G. Pappas and the Common Council.

Davignon has received praise by city officials and residents alike for his work at the department, specifically in recent years for his role in spearheading a number of capital improvement projects. Chiefly, he has been instrumental in overseeing the city's wastewater treatment plant upgrades project and helped secure a \$1.8 million Water Infrastructure Improvement Act grant for the installation of a new generator. Other plant improvements included the installation of the west

stormwater mechanical bar screen, a raw sewage sludge pump and a new ferric chloride chemical system.

Pappas was resolute in his appreciation for the work Davignon accomplished.

"(Bill) and I have had private conversations and he knows my sentiments, but I think the public should know that, first of all, I'm very happy that I had the privilege of appointing him and I think he did a very, very excellent job," Pappas said. "And yes, at times, he admits too, he asked for a lot of money, and at times we had to scratch our heads and wonder where to go with it. But he had the goal of leaving that place better than when he started. And he had a goal of doing away with just (doing) the patchwork ... and he wanted to bring it into the new century. And he has done that, and it's now they're prepared to move on into the future in

a much better way."

The council went on to approve Pappas' provisional appointment of Jason W. Koepsel as wastewater superintendent, effective Jan. 22, pending results of the required civil service exam scheduled for this year (date pending). His starting pay will be \$87,849.

### NT to Work with Belmont Housing Resources For WNY

The council authorized the mayor to enter into contract with Belmont Housing Resources for WNY for a foreclosure prevention outreach plan.

In a letter including in the meeting agenda, North Tonawanda City Development Director Michael Zimmerman explained, "The plan is a deliverable item related to the Local Initiative Support Coalition (ISC) Zombie Property Prevention grant awarded to the city in 2019."

He went on to explain the plan succinctly: "A housing agency, in

this case, Belmont, has access to data that we don't have access to and that's homeowners who are in default and in pre-foreclosure; they haven't been foreclosed on yet, but they're behind on mortgages.

"Utilizing them, we're able to access that data so we can do outreach to those homeowners in NT, to let them know about the council and resources and legal resources that are out there to help them, hopefully, prevent foreclosure, stay in their homes and, ultimately, have less foreclosed and vacant homes in the city."

Belmont is a nonprofit housing agency that provides services including housing counseling, financial education, property management, and housing program administration.

Zimmerman explained Belmont's suggested fee of \$8,000 would be covered by the ISC grant.

## Wheatfield veteran's memorial approved for Greenway funds

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

On Tuesday, the Host Communities Standing Committee (HCSC), which administers and oversees funding for Niagara River Greenway projects, voted to award funding for a veterans memorial in Wheatfield and a new plaza in front of the Aquarium of Niagara.

The veterans memorial project is set to receive \$100,000 as it moves from its current location at the Town Highway Department Garage on Ward Road, to a new site

located adjacent to the Town Hall. The funds will aid in the construction of a 7,800-square-foot paved walkway and display area for the town's recently restored Huey helicopter, tank and veterans memorial monument. The new location also provides ample parking, ADA compliance and restroom facilities, along with increased security and police presence due to its location near the Town Hall/courthouse.

In November, the Greenway Commission ruled the project in-

consistent with its goals because it lacks a connection to the river. However, project coordinators demonstrated the site will eventually link to the Wheatfield section of the Shoreline Trail segment, which is set to be constructed in 2023, as well as the Niagara River Greenway trail system. Additionally, the Wheatfield Town Board is set to sign a resolution next week committing to the creation of a connecting lane/trail to be constructed from the state bike route on Ni-

agara Falls Boulevard.

Lou Paonessa, representing the New York Power Authority, explained the reversal noting, "(The commission) offered suggestions on ways to make the project more of a Greenway project and we see that they're being addressed by the county, by the Town of Wheatfield and by the applicant ... so we have a little more comfort today than we did back in November."

### Guest Editorial

## Will you accept your role and responsibility?

I address this letter to you, John Q. Citizen.

I believe there are few people anywhere who wouldn't choose to calm our society and restabilize our country. You have a part to play on bringing our country back from the edge of self-destruction. I am old enough to remember when the "left" and the "right" would argue, tease, complain and even make fun of each other, but then present their perspectives on important matters and reach not consensus, but compromise in solving the issue. No one got everything they wanted, but everyone was heard and respected.

Today, it seems the two sides of political issues seek first to identify which trite and worn-out label ap-

plies to the other party and then, if it is the wrong label, every effort comes forth to slay the enemy and make their beliefs go away. There is no willingness to use the art of compromise, it is "my way or the highway." This must end.

I know what I believe and I know why I believe it. I am willing to enter into conversations with anyone as long as we both commit to maintaining open minds, a willingness to be convinced and a willingness to change.

I think there is a lesson here to be gleaned from history. In the days following Abraham Lincoln's assassination, his secretary, John Hay, found several handwritten documents in his desk. One dated September 1862 was titled "Medi-

tation on the Devine." It reads as follows:

"The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both *may* be, and one *must* be, wrong. God cannot be *for* and *against* the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party - and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true - that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere great power, on the minds of the now contestants, He could have

either *saved* or *destroyed* the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."

I invite you to meditate upon these words and apply them to our current reality. What are you able and willing to do to calm the waters and start the long, hard trek back to genuine leadership? Let's open a public dialogue, give and take, argue, entreat and respect everyone's opinion with civility and purpose.

Sincerely,  
Ken Staugenhaupt

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**PUBLISHER**  
Skip Mazenauer  
**GM/MANAGING EDITOR**  
Joshua Maloni  
**EDITOR IN CHIEF/SENTINEL EDITOR**  
Terrence P. Duffy  
**WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITORS**  
Joshua Maloni, Lucia Spiritosanto,  
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**ACCOUNTING/OFFICE MANAGER**  
Halie Hernandez

**PRODUCTION MANAGER/ GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
Wendy Juzwiczki  
**GRAPHIC DESIGNERS**  
Lucia Spiritosanto, Toni Snyder  
**CLASSIFIED MANAGER**  
Toni Snyder  
**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**  
Jennifer Walowitz  
**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS/REPORTERS**  
Michael J. Billoni, Kevin and Dawn Cobello,  
Michael DePietro, Karen Keefe,  
Wayne Peters, Mark Williams Jr.,  
David Yarger

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1859 Whitehaven Road  
Grand Island, N.Y. 14072

Phone (716) 773-7676  
Fax (716) 773-7190

Editorial:

Tribune@wnypapers.com  
Dispatch@wnypapers.com  
Sentinel@wnypapers.com

Advertising:

NFPDesign@wnypapers.com  
Classifieds:

NFPClassifieds@wnypapers.com  
Circulation:

NFPCirculation@wnypapers.com  
Legals:

legalnotice@wnypapers.com  
Website:

wnypapers.com

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