

Opinions

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LETTERS

Cites 'a lack of vision' by village leaders

Have you taken a stroll along Center Street lately?

Have you observed the developments and renovations that have taken place over the last few years? Are you satisfied with what you see? Or do you think that the architectural integrity, the historicity, and the very ambience that the village and its residents are so proud of is eroded by the misguidedness of those who designed these projects, compounded by the erroneous approvals given to them by our elected village officials?

Having lived in the village for over 50 years and having witnessed a variety of so-called improvements to the cityscape, I must admit that what I see saddens me. Increasingly, Center Street is devolving into a series of mini plazas more suitable to a quasi-urban shopping destination, such as Military Road or Niagara Falls Boulevard, than to a municipality that touts its small-town charm and historic importance.

Greenspace has been replaced by unrented structures fronting Center Street, and what appears to an asphalt pond bereft of landscaping. With all due respect to Joni Mitchell, "they have paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

Furthermore, the rentals are pricey and unaffordable for many who live in this area.

Ambling down the street towards North Fourth Street, the walker is visually assaulted by a mass of corrugated steel, in particular, a modernist grey structure inappropriate to its location. Such buildings can be attractive in the Southern Tier ski country or the Adirondacks, but they are out of place here.

There are other examples along the way of overbuilt and badly scaled development that do nothing to enhance the appearance of Center Street and seem to violate commonsense height restrictions. Take a close look at facades and building materials. You might be surprised at how tacky and disappointing they are. Sound architecture lifts the spirit; faux cosmetics do not.

Furthermore, of what economic benefit have these projects been to the village? Are all of them appropriately taxed? And even if so, does stressing the infrastructure outweigh the supposed economic advantages, should there be any? Developers rationalize their creations as a boon to the community. Is that true here? I wonder.

And I place the onus for all this on bad decisions made by village govern-

ment, not because of any guileful intent on their part, but more likely because of erroneous vision of what they think is good for the village and its future.

And that leads me to conclude why I support Claudia Marasco for the office of mayor of the Village of Lewiston, and Tina Coppins and Savana Bevacqua for the offices of Village of Lewiston trustees.

I have known Claudia for many years, and I appreciate her devotion to Lewiston and the preservation of its identity. She invests her heart and soul into every endeavor, whether personal or political. She is an honest and forthright person who is candid, informed and understanding whenever she discusses village matters as she meets people during her many walks through town. Her stated priorities of creating "community focused, open ethical government with communication and accessibility" are exactly what we need right now.

The village is unique and offers us spectacular and scenic beauty and architectural classicism. My wife and I raised our family here in this place we are proud of. I would like to see my grandson continue that tradition, I know Claudia can, together with Tina and Savana, help safeguard that future. Tina Coppins represents a family that

is literally legendary, having resided and done business her for several generations. Her vision statement to "make our residents are included in making important decisions ... and make them stakeholders in the future of the village" is a clear announcement about government transparency, and simultaneously is an invitation to the citizenry to become involved.

In addition, the duality of her priorities to "bring historical value back to the village" and to lead "smart growth and development while growing our tax base" certainly addresses the current state of the village.

How appropriate and pointed are her comments. The fundamental question elected leaders must consider whenever presented new proposals is, "How does this benefit the community?" Not, "How does this benefit the developer?" Both can be satisfied, but only if the former is fully reasoned.

Savana Bevacqua displays a very impressive resume. She has both experience and education, including military service and several degrees, all of which she attained while raising a family. And yet what is most important in respect to her running for office is her current status as a student of urban planning as she pursues a graduate degree.

In her words, "My clear interest is in preserving the historical culture of the village, while supporting sustainable business growth."

I wholeheartedly agree. Savana brings not only good intentions to the table, but a trained and talented eye toward guided and appropriate development truly a winning combination.

The choice is ours on election day. Are artificiality and trendy architectural style the preferred village identity residents here want? Is the character of the village diluted because of lack of vision by elected leaders? The village has survived for 200 years and has witnessed the ravages of man and of nature, from nearly total destruction by fire, to the battering of severe weather. Despite it all, it has persevered. But its charm is now threatened by the overreaching developments on Center Street. The current governing body will continue on the path they have established, which casts a shadow over the future. It is time for a change.

I encourage you to vote for Marasco, Coppins and Bevacqua on election day, June 21. Let your vote voice your opinion. More of the same? Or a vision for the future? It's all in your hands.

Frank Scelsa
Lewiston

Says Marasco is more than dedicated to serving others

Growing up in a multiethnic neighborhood with a father who served the immigrant community allowed me to experience first-hand what a servant of the people looked like. He became a notary public, learned how to prepare taxes, was an interpreter for the families who spoke little English, and therefore became the resource person for our community. This led to his successful campaign for councilman of the First Ward where we lived. That was only the beginning of his service.

Claudia Marasco follows in the footsteps of those who make it a lifelong endeavor to serve their communities. First, she listens to the residents of Lewiston, discovers what people need, want, or what concerns they have. Then she tackles the problems. As a trustee, she works tirelessly to learn all aspects of village government, and is critical when proper procedures are overlooked or a shortcut is taken.

When I expressed my concern to Claudia about the nationwide attacks on police, Claudia began gathering information that enabled us to start "Invest in a Vest." The year was 2017, and Claudia's approach was straightforward: "Let's simply ask the community to contribute."

The response was outstanding and resulted in \$30,000 raised to purchase 24 anti-assault weapon vests, one for each Lewiston Police Department officer and the K-9 officer. This project resulted in her second "Citizen of the Year" award, and my first.

This is how Claudia works to get things done. She is a diligent, dedicated worker. A vote for Claudia for mayor and Tina and Savana for trustees makes a complete package, because their combined skillsets complement each other. If you are a person who always votes along party lines, consider the facts that have been presented throughout this campaign and vote.

Arlene Davitt Sliz
Lewiston

Geiben endorses Welch, Eydt and Fittante

The Village of Lewiston election is fast approaching. I wholeheartedly endorse the reelection of Anne Welch for mayor and reelection of Victor Eydt for trustee and the election of James Fittante for trustee.

Mayor Anne Welch and Trustee Vic Eydt have a proven record of dedication and commitment to the village, which can be seen in projects that include but are not limited to the all-inclusive playground, new and positive ownership of the Frontier House, securing grants for new waterline and waterfront, overseeing the paving of Center Street improvements, and funding for the continuation and extension of the waterfront projects.

Jim Fittante is not a new comer to village issues; he is an active member of the Historic Preservation Commission, on the executive board of the Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce, an active member of the local International Moose organization and successful local architect and businessman.

To be a contributing and effective board member takes more than just showing up at the board meetings and voting; it takes a real commitment of time to research and address issues that need attention and action. Anne Welch and Vic Eydt have worked tirelessly for the residents of Lewiston and I am confident Jim Fittante will take do the same.

On Tuesday, June 21, please vote for Anne Welch for village mayor and for Victor Eydt and James Fittante for village trustees. Voting takes place at the Village Municipal Building (Red Brick Gym) from noon to 9 p.m.

William E. Geiben
Town of Lewiston Councilman
Former Village of Lewiston trustee and mayor

Anne Welch has earned a second term as village mayor

I have carefully read Claudia Marasco's articles in your paper, as well as letters from her supporters. Although I am sincerely grateful for Claudia's contributions to our village over the years, she is not the right person to lead us through the challenges ahead.

Anne Welch has clearly earned a second term as mayor of the Village of Lewiston. Mayor Welch has a record of accomplishments for which she should be proud. With Anne's leadership, our village survived two very turbulent years while many other towns and villages around the country in similar situations were turned into shambles.

Nationally we are heading into what most economists agree may be a long economic recession. We are experiencing gas prices and inflation at record levels with no end in sight. All our village residents, families and businesses face tough times. Providing and financing Village of Lewiston government services will be more challenging than ever. I trust that Anne Welch will be able to make the tough decisions necessary and lead us through the storm.

We also need somebody with the strength to stand up to developers, while at the same time recognizing that without the investments and financial risks taken by those developers, the village has nothing. Most importantly, we need somebody as mayor who will be both business and family friendly. Anne Welch has all those qualities, and more.

Over my lifetime and as a military veteran, I have lived in four states and in several cities and towns before I decided to retire to Lewiston. In every place I have lived where Democrat political leaders were in charge, taxes went up, businesses fled, and the quality of life deteriorated.

For the sake of the Village of Lewiston, my vote will be for Anne Welch and the entire Republican ticket on June 21. For all voters, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and others, please don't take this village election lightly. There is more at stake in this election than we may now realize.

Rick Festa
Village of Lewiston

Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

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