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Clerk's Corner

Town of Lewiston sets next virtual meeting

•The next Town Board meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. June 22. Notification of the meeting being on Zoom will be posted on the town website, www.townoflewiston.us.

•The 2020 presidential, state/local primary and the 27th District special election will be held from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, June 23. The following polling places are open: Lewiston Fire Co. No. 1 – 145 N. Sixth St., for the

TOWN CLERK'S CORNER



Donna R. Garfinkel

following voting districts – 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14. Lewiston Fire Co. No. 2 – 1705 Saunders Settlement Road, for the following voting districts – 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. All questions should be directed to the Board of Elections at 438-4040 or https://elections.niagara.ny.us/

•Planning a home project? A building permit is needed for the construction of a shed, fence, installation of a pool and many other projects. Permits are available through the Building and Zoning Department. Further information can be obtained by calling 754-8213, ext. 227 or ext. 245.

•Returning Lewiston snowbirds: The post office will not forward

water bills. To avoid receiving your water bill late, or the possibility of not receiving it at all, the Water Department asks anyone returning to Lewiston to contact them to change the bill back to your home address. Call 754-8213, ext. 235 or ext. 236.

•New York State Free Fishing Days will be the weekend of June 27-28. This is a great opportunity to try fishing for the first time or to take the family fishing.

•Garbage collection reminder: The town has a contract with Modern Disposal for garbage collection. The contract allows for five garbage bags and/or cans and one large item a week. Modern

Disposal can be reached at 754-8226 with any questions.

•The Town Hall is closed to the public, but is staffed. All town business can be handled by phone, mail, drop box at Town Hall, or email. Call Town Hall at 754-8213 and we can assist you in the best way to help.

•Thank you to Niagara Frontier Publications for allowing the "Clerk's Corner" to appear in the Tribune/Sentinel. This is a great opportunity for me to update residents on what is happening. I continue to receive positive feedback regarding the content and appreciate the notifications.
Thank you!

Niagara Falls Memorial

Leading way to halt spread of COVID-19, address disparities

BY JOSEPH A. RUFFOLO
President and CEO of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center

Our world has been turned upside down by COVID-19. The pandemic has laid bare deep rooted health disparities.

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center has been compelled to make some heartbreaking changes. To stop the spread of infection, we could not allow family members to visit loved ones who are medical center patients or Schoellkopf Health Center residents.

COVID-19 completely changed the way we work: donning personal protective equipment such as N-95 respirator masks, gowns and face shields, practicing extreme hand hygiene, undergoing daily health screenings and having our temperatures taken in our workplace – sometimes two or three times in a single work shift.

The pain of this pandemic has been borne by the Niagara community. At our downtown campus alone, we have diagnosed 180 confirmed cases of this pernicious disease – 15% of all Niagara County cases as of this writing. Fifteen of those patients – or 20% of the county's total – lost their lives to COVID-19. We grieve with every loss.

Particularly distressing is the fact that minorities have been hardest hit, especially in a city where nearly one of every four residents is a person of color. In fact, the percentage of African American residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 is nearly three times the percentage of white residents who tested positive.

These and other findings were clearly a call to action.

Very early in our pandemic response, we began mapping the addresses of patients who tested positive for COVID-19. In doing so, we identified some neighborhoods as COVID-19 hot spots.

More often than not, those neighborhoods included housing complexes – some with 200 or more apartments – in which large numbers of people live in very close proximity to one another. Some of those neighborhoods have significant populations of minority residents.

As Niagara's leading health care provider, we knew it was incumbent upon us to use that information to initiate widespread testing and contact tracing that are so important to identifying, isolating, tracing and stopping the spread of COVID-19. We knew we couldn't wait for people to come to us for

testing. We would need to go to them.

Enter Mayor Robert Restaino and Niagara Falls Housing Authority Executive Director Clifford Scott. Both of these community leaders publicly endorsed our plan to immediately initiate targeted COVID-19 testing in city neighborhoods as a priority for protecting the health of our community and restoring its local economy.

Within a very short time, our mobile testing team has conducted or scheduled diagnostic testing at five Niagara Falls Housing Authority sites and at the independently owned Niagara Towers. With the support of Niagara University's president, the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M., and city school Superintendent Mark Laurrie, we are now conducting weekly testing for staff and faculty members at Niagara University. Memorial will begin offering testing to families participating in the lunch distribution program at city school sites, including Hyde Park Elementary School and Harry F. Abate Elementary School.

Over the past month, we have provided COVID-19 testing seven days a week and have tested more than 2,500 local residents.

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center has a proud tradition of mak-

ing extraordinary efforts to reduce health care disparities for racial minorities and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in areas such as cardiovascular disease, primary care and behavioral health. Through Memorial's new affiliation with the Roswell Park Cancer Care Network, we are on our way to addressing cancer-related service inequities.

Memorial is proud of its focused efforts to improve the health of the Niagara community. We leave the four walls of the hospital and reach out to the community to provide postnatal care to high-risk moms, to deliver top-notch care management services to 3,000 Medicaid clients, and to educate neighborhood residents on cancer prevention and screening.

As we all struggle to cope with the changes and losses brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we pledge to carry on our meaningful and effective ways to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus. We pledge to protect the most vulnerable among us from COVID-19 and other diseases. And, we pledge to continue working with members of the recently announced Niagara Falls Health Equity Task Force to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

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