

Town of Niagara: Hefty price tag for water tower paint job

Action taken on Old Carborundum building

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The Town of Niagara water tower was the subject of some discussion at the regular Town Board meeting on June 16. A late agenda resolution to award the "Water Tank Exterior Painting Project" to Utility Service Co. Inc. for \$1,581,600 raised some questions among board members.

Richard Sirianni had several questions about the project. He inquired as to the current condition of the tower as well as to how long the new paint would last, noting, "A million and a half to paint is a lot of money."

Robert Lannon of GHD Engineering replied that the paint job should last a minimum of 20 years, noting the current paint job was well past that having last been painted in 2001.

Speaking on the current condition of the tower's paint, Lannon said that, from below the tank, there are exposed areas showing the tower's original coat. He noted areas of the legs have what appears to be green paint exposed. He explained it was actually the primer coat showing where the top coat has peeled off.

Lannon also expounded on the paint job's high price point. An adhesion test found that the new paint job would not simply adhere to the old, peeling paint, and so a simple top coat was not an option. Furthermore, he explained lead tests indicating lead paint would mean the entire existing paint would have to be sandblasted off before a primer can be applied.

Lannon also said Water/Sewer Superintendent Steve Roberts indicated there is a mixer inside the tank that is also in need of repair. The mixer is still under warranty,

so the plan would be to have it serviced while the tank is prepped for painting.

Councilman Marc M. Carpenter asked Lannon whether other bids were fielded. Lannon said there were only two bidders for the project, with the other being Amstar of WNY, which offered a quote of \$1,670,000, roughly \$100,000 higher.

Carpenter then asked why such a high-ticket item was added to the agenda so late. Lannon said that, since the bidding schedule began in late May/early June, he wasn't able to get it on the agenda earlier. "If I would've, there would have been a resolution with a blank in it. So it was nothing but a timing issue," Lannon said.

Councilman Samuel Gatto also asked whether Utility Service Co. was insured for any potential accidents or damage to nearby cars or homes. Lannon said it is, adding, "We don't want anyone to wind up with white and orange checkerboards on their house."

Sirianni urged the board to look into ways to set aside more funds for these kinds of repairs in the future, including collecting revenue the town gains by leasing out its communications towers. Incidentally, a resolution to approve the sale of the town's telecommunications easement - currently leased to T-Mobile on the town water tower - to Blackdot Capital and Real Estate for the sum of \$450,000 was tabled.

"I know obviously we're going to be set for 20 years (after painting), but somehow whether it's through Verizon or if this other deal doesn't fall through, somehow the town, for future boards and residents, really needs to ... set aside \$75,000 (from funds generated from leas-

ing out the towers), because it's going to be a lot more than a million and a half in 20 years," he said. "This really becomes a dilemma for future boards."

Supervisor Lee Wallace said he agreed.

Discussions evolved into the overall future of the tower, which communities rely on it the most, and whether or not a removal of the tower would be something the town needs to concern itself with in the future.

Lannon said, based on his previous experience being involved in discussions years ago mulling over the removal of the tower, it would be "highly unlikely."

"The idea drew the ire of Niagara County Water District, which at the time said they had just had a study done indicating they needed more storage, not less. So you would have to get it past Niagara County Water, Niagara County Health and New York State Health departments," Lannon said.

Wallace noted that, when the Military Road School burned down last year, local fire departments actually drained the water tank trying to put it out the blaze.

Elsewhere, Wallace went on to let the board know the town does have the money to pay for the bond through funds generated by a \$15 maintenance fee.

The town went on to unanimously approve the resolution.

Old Carborundum Building

The board also approved a resolution to "declare an emergency pursuant to Section 121-8 of the Town Code due to the immediate danger to the life, health, and safety of the residents of the Town of Niagara existing on the property located at 3425 Hyde Park Boulevard as reported by the Town

Code Enforcement Officer."

"This was the old Carborundum building. We had discussions on this last month after the meeting time. (Councilman Charles Teixeira) brought it up. In the meantime, we've had some complaints and we actually had someone file with the county health department. We've know it's been a problem, that's why we're taking this action," Wallace said.

The resolution authorizes the town to "make immediate repairs to the dangerous conditions including, but not limited to, cutting of the grass, demolition of the loading dock, pumping out standing water, capping off and placing millings to avoid future ponding of water, installation of a fence around the property, and any other action needed to make the property safe."

Proposed Speedway Store Near Six Corners

The board also saw three resolutions pertaining to a final site plan, special use permit request, and SEQR review for a proposed Speedway convenience store/vehicle fueling station to be located at 7001 Packard Road, on behalf of Jonathan Woher, AICP, of McBride Dale Clarion.

The board approved the resolutions with Councilman Sirianni being the lone holdout in all three.

He said the corner is already too congested and cited the frequency of accidents at the intersection.

Carpenter said he had been in talks with local traffic officials, including Frank Cirillo, Region 5 director of the New York State Department of Transportation in Buffalo, and Mike Roche a civil engineer for the DOT, about doing another potential traffic study for the area that involves traffic from Porter, Packard and Military roads.

"As we all know, coming off of Porter Road, about 75% of traffic tries to merge into the right lane on Packard Road, and it's only about a hundred yards between that light and Military Road. We talked at length about the possibility of having the DOT putting in a right hand turning lane westward off of Packard towards Military Road," Carpenter said. "That being said, because of COVID and a shortage of manpower, they'll look into another study for that area looking into the impact Speedway would have on the area, and whether that would warrant further action. ... They said in the near future they would be coming to that location and that (Roche) was well aware of the area."

School district budgets pass

Lew-Port

Residents of the Lewiston-Porter School District overwhelmingly approved the \$49.092 million budget for fiscal year 2020-21 Tuesday in a first-ever exclusive absentee ballot vote.

According to unofficial results released that evening, by a count of 2,644 in favor to 1,183 against, voters decidedly voiced their approval for the plan that maintains Lew-Port student programs, covers a number of cost increases and maintains staffing.

Voters also lent favor to Lew-Port's ongoing capital improvement project of district buildings that continues to 2024. The final count was 2,450 to 1,369 opposed, which will now see HVAC and air conditioning work in the Primary and Intermediate Education buildings, plus new turf and lighting for the district's athletic fields, among other improvements on the Lew-Port campus.

In the Board of Education race that saw four candidates vying for three open seats, incumbent Danielle M. Mullen won reelection to a three-year term with 2,690 votes. Newcomers Charlotte Huebschmann was elected to a three-year term with 2,404 votes while Jennifer Klemick (2,377 votes) won election to a one-year term that began June 17. Mullen and Huebschmann will begin their terms on

July 1.

Candidate Anika Fetzner finished fourth with 1,830 votes.

North Tonawanda

School districts in Niagara-Wheatfield and North Tonawanda saw record voter turnout this year as voters in both districts approved their proposed budgets on June 16. The results mirrored those statewide where 99% of school budgets were on track to win approval by voters, according to a preliminary analysis by New York State United Teachers.

In North Tonawanda, a budget of \$81,016,940 was approved by voters 2,993 to 1,240. It's anticipated that there will be a zero percent tax levy increase based on the budget.

Throughout the budget process, the North Tonawanda school board indicated it wanted to use more reserve funds to offset a loss of tax revenue as a temporary measure to provide relief to taxpayers.

A second proposition allowing for the purchase of buses was approved 3,367 to 944. The proposition allows for the purchase of 21 large, 66-passenger Type C school buses; two Type A school buses; and one small Type A wheelchair school bus.

According to the district's Budget Newsletter, "This will allow the District to keep the tax levy at a 0% increase and purchase buses using reserves. This is part of the long-

term financial plan put in place last year to use savings to finance the purchase of the fleet."

Lastly, a third proposition was approved 3,068 to 1,097, allowing the district to get an additional 10% state aid on the costs needed to implement energy performance improvements.

According to the newsletter, "This extra aid along with the energy and maintenance savings from the new LED lights and boilers at North Tonawanda Intermediate and Ohio Elementary schools will help the District keep taxes low in future budgets. This is also part of the long-term financial plan to continue to cut operational costs."

In the school board election, incumbents Matthew Kennedy and Zachary Niemiec won reelection with 2,704 and 2,572 votes, respectively.

Afterward, Kennedy, the incumbent board president, shared his outlook for the upcoming year.

"The district's in a really good position as far as this budget goes, we're still being at a zero rate (levy increases) which is great for taxpayers, but I think the district's in a good position for this particular budget to execute on the year. Next year's funding process is very uncertain. We don't know what that will look like. Obviously, the governor and the Legislature will continue to give us updates as it goes

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