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Niagara County DPW working to make roads, parks better

I think it's safe to say that our team at the Niagara County Department of Public Works (DPW) can put the snow plows away for the season. Of course, that doesn't mean it is time for vacation, but rather DPW shifts its priorities and focus to other areas. I want to cover of few of those in this month's column.

It's no secret that our local roadways experience significant wear and tear through winter. That is why it's very important that we continually invest in our road infrastructure. The most recent Road Ratings Summary produced by the regional transportation planning council shows that DPW has been making great progress. In the last six years, the miles of county roads that rate as poor or low has decreased by nearly 30%, while those rated as fair to good have increased by 20%. And above all else, the amount of miles under construction increased by 130% during that time, meaning we are out there fixing roads.

For the coming season, some of DPW's big projects include resurfacing projects on Ewings Road,

parts of Bear Ridge Road, parts of Tonawanda Creek Road west of Campbell, and Nash Road south of Route 62. They will also be completing bridge and culvert replacements on Carmen Road, Wilson Burt Road, Griswold and Porter Center Road. As always, please remember that many of these projects will require temporary detours and, while we understand the inconvenience a detour imposes, we ask for your patience.

Another part of DPW is the environmental division, which operates, among other things, the household hazardous waste (HHW) program. I know people are always interested in getting rid of those old chemicals that may be kicking around the garage or basement. During the 10 years the HHW program has been operating, more than 900,000 pounds of harmful products have been removed from

NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE



Becky Wydysh
Chairwoman

Niagara County homes. And new this year, we are accepting latex paint for recycling.

The county will be hosting four events for people to recycle household hazardous waste. I am excited that the first one will be held in Lewiston from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, June 18, at the Lewiston Highway Department. These events are always popular, so we are requiring registration, which can be done at www.rethinkyourwaste.com/events.

Finally, operation of our five county parks – Oppenheim, Krull, West Canal Marina, Royalton Ravine and Burmaster at Bond Lake – is also under the DPW umbrella. The county has a first-class parks system and I hope everyone will take full advantage of the many amenities that can be found in our parks. Across our five-park system, you can find splash pads, playgrounds, hiking trails, boat launches, picnic shelters and even an internationally ranked disc golf course. That's right, the Bond Lake Disc Golf Course at Burmaster Park was recently rated as the 41st best course in the world, on the

list for the second year in a row. And that was out of over 10,000 rated courses. Building on that success, DPW will be opening a new disc golf course at Royalton Ravine Park this summer.

DPW is also working in partnership with NYSDOT to provide a new entrance to Oppenheim Park. The new entrance will be aligned with the intersection at Witmer Road. For anyone who has tried to exit that park, especially to make a left-hand turn, they know it can be a challenge. This reconfiguration on Niagara Falls Boulevard will provide a safer way to enter and leave the park.

Our parks are terrific and, for those who have not reserved their shelter yet for that family reunion or other special event, there is still time to do so. Go to www.niagaracounty.com, click on "Parks" under the "Departments" tab, and you will see information on how to make your reservation.

As always, I want to thank Public Works Commissioner Garret Meal and his entire team for the work they do for Niagara County residents.

Piper provides update on Potter's Field ahead of dedication ceremony

With the village bicentennial less than a month away, I wanted to offer an update as to the progress that has been made both in the cemetery and the actual dedication ceremony itself. Just over a year ago, I took it upon myself to clean up and restore the old cemetery to be fitting for this milestone celebration. A lot of long hours and hard work is starting to pay off. I still hope to accomplish a few more things in the remaining time I have left to complete the last couple of jobs I would like to have completed. My biggest hope now is to have the 100-year-old-plus Victorian urns reset upright, painted and filled with flowers once more like I remembered them to be when I was much younger. I still had hopes of securing some decorative trees to replace those who

have succumbed to time and the elements to beautify the grounds once more.

The dedication ceremony will be held on Sunday, July 3, at 1 p.m. in Potter's Field behind the old church in the original section of the cemetery. With the donations I was able to raise for a permanent Potter's Field Monument and a memorial bench to accompany it, I must say that I am more than pleased with the finished monument and bench. I started out with a limited budget, but, by the generosity of other donors, and Jim Farchione at Niagara Monument Works, they are beyond my expectations. They truly are.

With a lot of assistance from Eva Nicklas and Tim Henderson of the Lewiston Council on the Arts, the dedication ceremony

will be charged with much emotion and focus on the unknown souls that reside within its boundaries.

In addition, I wish to thank village Mayor Anne Welch and the Board of Trustees for the honor to serve as village historian. Having established the Lewiston Local History Museum in the Red Brick School in July of 2017, allowing the first-ever public viewing of my private lifetime local history collection. Over the past four years under Mayor Welch, I was granted permission to expand into the offices and boardroom; now I have completely taken over the main hallway as well. With various donations from Mayor Welch and other Lewiston residents, and my colleagues in the antique shops, Jeff Morrow of The Book Corner and Sue

Sullivan – my dear friend at Sue's Frame of Mind who for the past (I believe) 27 years has worked with me to preserve, restore, and frame all of the artwork. Lastly, the staff of the village clerk's office and Larry Wills and the crew of the DPW who have had to clean up after me, and who continue to assist me in the cemetery.

It is my sincere hope to see residents and visitors alike at the dedication ceremony, and pay a visit to the museum to enjoy my efforts to preserve history, so as not to be forgotten in the future.

*Russ Piper
Village historian
'Gatekeeper of the secrets, scandals, scoundrels and skeletons who reside in the Marble Orchard'*

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