

Special 10th edition of Historic LaSalle Calendar recalls Falls' past

SUBMITTED BY TERRY LASHER WINSLOW

A special 10th edition of the Historic LaSalle Photo Calendar has just been released. Terry Lasher Winslow has again put together a calendar that features historical photographs of the Village of LaSalle.

Once a part of the Town of Niagara, LaSalle became an official village on Dec. 2, 1897. It was annexed into the City of Niagara Falls in 1927. During this time, as the industries grew along the river, the village expanded and housing for the workers was needed. New developments sprang up just upstream from the factories and, with the trolley lines on Buffalo Avenue, it was logical to develop the farmlands into housing stock. In the beginning of the 20th century, LaSalle experienced a rapid growth that took it from a farm community to a

residential suburb. As a result, pressure to build more schools, roads, water and sewer lines were major factors in the vote to annex into the City of Niagara Falls.

This year, the calendars are available at Augie's Restaurant in the Pine Plaza, 8207 Niagara Falls Blvd.; Sunshine Café, 8649 Buffalo Ave.; Salisa's Diner, 2214 Niagara Falls Blvd.; Con-fetti Cottage, 7917 Buffalo Ave.; or by calling 425-4005.

This special calendar features 67 different photos. Each month features a different subject, including bridges, motels, churches, the International Paper Company houses, gas station and auto dealers, Griffon Manor, cracker box houses, trains and trolleys, Cayuga Island, village and town halls, and restaurants.

Lasher Winslow, an authority on the history of the former



International Paper Company houses under construction at Buffalo Avenue and 68th Street. (Submitted by the author)

Village of LaSalle, is a former Niagara County historian and has been researching and documenting the history of LaSalle for more than a decade. She also

owns a consulting firm called House Historians, documenting the history of buildings for owners and submitting National Register of Historic Places nom-

inations for tax credits for their restoration.

For more information, call 425-4005.

North Tonawanda adopts 2021 budget

3.75% increase in property tax far lower than earlier proposal, but still above state tax cap

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

On Nov. 10, the North Tonawanda Common Council voted 3-2 to adopt its revised 2021 budget, which includes a 3.75% property tax increase (equating to roughly \$50 per \$100,000 assessment). The figure is lower than the 6.52% increase called for in Mayor Arthur G. Pappas' initially proposed budget, which was heavily criticized by residents and some council members alike.

While the revised increase is still over New York state's mandated 2% tax cap, the council approved an override in October.

City Clerk/Treasurer Donna Braun outlined some of the key budget figures for the city's general fund: Appropriations – \$38,625,982.36; Estimated revenue – \$20,905,347; Real property tax levy – \$17,839,696.30. Total revenues are listed as \$38,745,043.30, a gain of \$119,060.94.

The two nay votes, which were cast by Aldermen-at-Large Austin Tylec and Robert Pecoraro, were met with criticism by 2nd Ward Alderman Frank DiBernardo.

"I'm a little disappointed with the fact that everybody supposedly spent many, many weeks and months helping out the city and I hear two nay votes from people who say they've been involved with this, (and) it kind of concerns me," DiBernardo said. "We spent all this time getting where we're at and I hear two nay votes. I think you definitely owe

us an answer. Either you didn't get involved helping us to get to this point or there's something else why you're saying nay."

DiBernardo also noted that, with just one more nay vote, the mayor's initial proposed budget (including the 6.52% increase) would have kicked in on Nov. 15.

Explaining their votes, Pecoraro and Tylec both cited the financial stresses the ongoing pandemic is having on working families.

"The last thing hard-working families need in the city is a raise in their taxes," Pecoraro said. "New York state, as you well know, is way overtaxed. ... The state government thinks it could tax its way out of problems and the City of North Tonawanda should know that this is not the case."

Pecoraro went on to note the pandemic is also having detrimental impacts to local businesses, including Brownie's Sports Bar and Tavern and Crazy Jake's restaurant, which recently announced they were closing permanently, citing the pandemic's effects on business.

During his comments, Tylec added the city has failed in years past to make the necessary financial decisions that could've curtailed the pressing financial situation.

"I've been here three years and there's been many times this year and years that I've made multiple suggestions that would hopefully keep our tax rate low each year

and things have been implemented, to some degree," Tylec said.

Council President Eric Zadzilka, noting this was the first time Pecoraro has voted nay on a budget, while Tylec has voted nay the last three years, went on to chide Tylec specifically for his vote.

"You've been the most vocal (council member) ... backing the auditors, telling us their recommendation for this year was to raise taxes. I did not receive any tax-lowering idea for the 2021 budget from yourself," Zadzilka said.

Tylec noted the audit from the NYS comptroller's office does not directly recommend raising taxes, rather, it recommends creating a multiyear financial plan and capital plan, which would include plans for increasing revenues by either raising real property taxes or reducing services. The audit goes on to say, "If the Mayor and the Council choose to address budget shortfalls by increasing property taxes, the increases could be significant."

Tylec also criticized the current 2021 budget as it pertains to state aid. Currently, the state is withholding roughly 20% of aid to local municipalities. The city's current 2021 estimates aid will return to pre-COVID 19 levels. Tylec noted he and DiBernardo had previously asked for the budget to be drafted under a "worst

case scenario" where the aid is still estimated to include the 20% reduction.

Elsewhere, the board voted to approve the 2021 water fund budget (appropriations – \$2,659,250; water fund revenues – \$2,883,700 with a surplus of \$224,450) and the 2021 sewer fund budget (appropriation \$4,545,307; revenues \$4,816,500 with a surplus of \$362,193).

These budgets included water and sewer base rate increases from \$12 to \$15. Sewer rates will rise from \$4.50 to \$5 per thousand gallons. Officials have noted previously that these rates have not been changed in 10 years despite rising expenditures.

Both budgets were passed 4-1, with Pecoraro providing the only nay votes.

In his closing comments, Zadzilka extended thanks to the taxpayers and said the city will con-

tinue to look for ways to increase revenues going forward.

"During these hard times, the (last) thing we want to do is raise taxes," he said. "We're (city officials) very frugal, very prudent; we try to keep as much money in your pockets as we can. ... Moving forward, we all have a lot of things we want to do to create more revenues for the city and to continue forward. And to Bob Pecoraro's point – that's what we're going to strive for, that's what we need to, and we're going to hold New York state accountable."

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