

# Town of Niagara looking to land aerospace company, nearly 600 jobs

**BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO**  
Interim Tribune Editor

The Town of Niagara is considering making zoning changes to a disused hangar at the former U.S. Army Reserve Center (USARC) site to help lure an airplane manufacturing facility to the area along with roughly 600 new jobs.

During Wednesday night's Town Board work session, representatives for Stavatti Aerospace, a Wyoming-based aerospace manufacturer that designs and produces military, commercial and general aviation aircraft, said it is looking at the USARC site as a potential landing spot to create a prototype production facility. The overall project is said to be around \$26 million.

The site in question was formerly an 18-acre single parcel that was sold to the town in 2019. The former USARC site was

then subdivided, with 15 acres being sold to Reger Holdings, a private developer, and another 3 acres reserved for a proposed First Response and Preparedness Center, which would be operated by Niagara County.

Before procedures can continue, however, the company is asking the town to re-designate the zoning for the sight from "light industrial" to "heavy industrial."

The project cleared its first hurdle with the town on Tuesday, when the planning board recommended the approval of the rezoning request and made a negative declaration on the project's environmental review.

Stavatti's legal representatives, Matthew Fitzgerald and Patrick Fitzgerald (no relation) of Phillips Lytle LLP, were on hand for a short overview presentation and to answer some questions. They said the company was looking to

knock down three buildings on the site that are currently in a state of disrepair. Other existing buildings will be reused.

Deputy Supervisor Charles Teixeira asked what the project might do to local traffic in the area. Patrick Fitzgerald replied, "For those familiar with this site, it was formally the U.S. Army Reserve Center, which once posted approximately 2,400 employees on a given day. We're projecting in about five years time to have 596 employees onsite, which would be staggered in three different shifts, which themselves are staggered internally to offset any potential traffic issues. Even if that wasn't the case, even if we weren't doing that staggering, we're still significantly less than what the cycle was designed to handle at the capacity."

Teixeira also asked whether the facility would bring with it

more air-traffic to the area. Patrick Fitzgerald replied that, as a prototype facility, there would only be between three-to-four aircraft on site and they don't anticipate there would be increased air traffic, at least in the beginning. However, he added, "With any business, things like to grow and expand; so possibly in the future."

Board member Richard Siriani indicated his early support for the project. "It's about time some company comes in - and hopefully you are the one - to take advantage of that long runway at that airport; because there's not a lot around it; there's room to build, and I'm hoping this all works."

"Our client is thrilled to be here, which you can see by the presence here today," Matthew Fitzgerald said, gesturing to the seven-or-eight Stavatti represen-

tatives in attendance. "We're really working hard to move this forward very quickly."

On Thursday, Supervisor Lee Wallace said a public hearing for the project would be held Tuesday, Oct. 20.

When asked for his thoughts on the project, Wallace said he was certainly optimistic, but he and other officials are just taking it one day at a time.

"It sounds exciting and I think it will help not only the Town of Niagara but Niagara County, the air base - everything. If it comes to fruition, and it's everything they say it's going to be, it should be a win-win for everybody," he said. "We'll be behind it, we'll support it as long as everything is done properly and everything is done in a timely fashion, but we're not going to rush to do it."

## Ransomville Free Library basket auction

Event slated for Sept. 26

The Ransomville Free Library is holding a basket auction benefit presented by the Friends of the Ransomville Library. The basket auction features more than 100 items. It will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26, at the library, 3733 Ransomville Road.

For more information, call 791-4073, visit the library's Facebook page or [www.ransomvillelibrary.org](http://www.ransomvillelibrary.org). (Photo by Wayne Peters)



## North Tonawanda appoints Frank DiBernardo 2nd Ward alderman

**BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO**  
Interim Tribune Editor

On Tuesday, the North Tonawanda Common Council voted 4-1 (Austin Tylec) to name Frank DiBernardo, an Independent, as the long-term appointment for 2nd Ward alderman.

DiBernardo currently serves on the city's Planning Commission and has previ-

ously served on the city's Board of Assessment and Review. He was also a longtime North Tonawanda School Board member, and served as School Board president in 2013.

The alderman vacancy was created Aug. 18 when Donna Braun resigned to become the city's new clerk/treasurer. Her seat had been filled in the interim by

97-year-old WWII veteran William Gosch who submitted his resignation letter this week.

According to Council President Eric M. Zadzilka, the council received four resumes for the position. DiBernardo was nominated by Zadzilka, seconded by 1st Ward Alderman Robert Schmigel. Tylec nominated Zachary Niemiec, a Demo-

crat and current member of the North Tonawanda School Board, but the nomination was not seconded. Niemiec had vied for Braun's seat in the 2019 election, but came up short by 90 votes.

DiBernardo will be officially sworn in Sept. 15 prior to the council's regular meeting.

## NT pushing for 2020 census participation

From North Tonawanda Mayor Arthur Pappas:

A proclamation was given, thanking the residents of North Tonawanda for being proactive with the 2020 census.

"The United States census has been ongoing and is important to note this means a lot to our community," Alderman Robert Pecoraro said. "I personally want to thank Karl Bauer, a 2020 census

enumerator, for bringing this to our attention. Although we are successful, we need to push the census across the goal line. Our attempt to make everyone count is needed."

The census determines New

York state representation in Congress. It influences deferral funding for essential programs in education, public transit systems, highway planning, community development, etc. New York pays more in taxes than 47 other states; however, it receives only 90 cents for every tax dollar paid - well below the \$1.21 that is the national average.

If we are undercounted, we risk communities going without needed resources. To date, New York

state is rated 36th of the 50 states at 60.5% response rate. Niagara County is No. 2 in reporting of 62 counties (69.3% response rate). North Tonawanda is rated 48th, at 71.8% response rate of 597 cities.

The mayor's office and Common Council extend our deepest appreciation to the residents of North Tonawanda for their reporting on the 2020 census and encourage those who have yet to be counted to do so immediately.

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## Diamonds in the Ruff Animal Rescue holding basket raffle

Diamonds in the Ruff Animal Rescue is asking folks to come out and support the animals at its Baskets in the Barn basket raffle fundraiser, 11-4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20,

It will be held at the barn behind Rapids Fire Hall, 7195 Plank Road, Lockport. The event will feature a basket raffle, high-end raffle, 50/50, baked goods and pizza for sale.

Winning baskets will be drawn after 4 p.m. Raffle organizers will call people to pick up their baskets.

Organizers note masks are required and ask that no loitering take place in order to assist in social distancing.

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