

# District embarks on seamless transition to online learning

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classes – 10 in total; and musical offerings. Classes began this week, and are offered in Zoom or Google Meet formats. Community Ed will continue through December.

“We all understand that learning is what our souls crave. I encourage you to reward yourself by learning something new this fall, with the added comfort of being in your own home,” Muzzi said. “The program is open to anyone who would like to try something new. We are opening our doors to the entire surrounding community, continuing to make Lew-Port the hub of continued learning in the region.”

Casseri said, “We are proud to create this opportunity for our community. We would love to have had our full complement of classes back on campus for community education, but given where we are at with our schools and the pandemic, that would have been impossible to accomplish.”

So what’s new and exciting with Lew-Port Community Ed online for fall 2020? Plenty!

Browsing through the course listings, one finds such interest

areas as “Online Certifications and Test Prep” for those moving on to higher education and beyond. Course offerings include ACT and SAT boot camps and preparation, and college application essay writing. There’s also notary public training.

In the area of finance, one will find such interests as investing, “Estate Planning 101,” the Medicare spectrum, Social Security, the latest on IRAs and “Top Financial Concerns for Retirees.” All are available online, convenient and at home for the student – no need to travel during our oftentimes-challenging weather.

“I’ve been lecturing on estate planning for several sessions at Lew-Port. The classes have been very well received and attended. I’m excited to bring my seminar into a virtual setting, as I believe it opens up enrollment to a wider audience – especially for folks that worry about venturing out in inclement weather,” said instructor and attorney Thomas Cannavo.

He went on to praise the Lew-Port district for its swift transition to online availability.

“I would also like to recognize the amount of work it took for the

district to transition the program, in a short amount of time, to an online format, considering all the logistics involved,” Cannavo said.

Moving onto to tech offerings, one finds a whole slew of “get acquainted” courses for the newbie crowd. Consider such titles as “Understanding Your Device,” which delves into that new computer, smartphone or tablet; or how about a look at “Essential Smartphone Skills,” which includes discussions on apps and various organizational tasks; or developing a better understanding of Google – it’s more than just email. Here, newbie online students can gain a better understanding of myriad options with these devices they never knew existed.

And that’s not all. Still more topics include understanding Windows, using the internet, and learning such handy computer tasks as copy/paste features and file/folder management.

Also intros to various Microsoft Office features – Word, Excel and PowerPoint – and advanced-level courses on how-to master this tech.

“I started teaching computer and smartphone use to adults

last year for Lew-Port’s wonderful new community education program. I strongly believe more education for all is important for a civilized society to exist,” tech instructor Nancy Wise said.

Inviting residents to join the Community Ed virtual crowd, she added, “Going online was the right thing for the district to do. I know many classes are thriving online. Keeping everyone involved and safe from this awful virus, yet connected, is so very important.”

Getting into individual tastes, Lew-Port’s Community Ed online courses include such interests as health and wellness – delving into psychics, self-healing, and one’s inner peace.

Into learning and leisure? There are courses on connecting with the angels; beekeeping for beginners; yoga; learning the German language; and discovering Hawaii. There’s even a new self-awareness course for parents and teens to better understand one another.

And music? How about two levels on guitar, and two covering the art of singing and self-growth?

All are available this fall, and in a completely safe and health-con-

scious atmosphere for users, with Lewiston-Porter’s all-new virtual Community Education Program.

Casseri said, “(This) online course option for fall 2020 is hopefully a placeholder for the re-establishment of our full program in 2021-22. Please consider taking one of these courses; I know our Community Education instructors have put it in great planning to create the best possible courses in the online environment. Enjoy!”

Lew-Port Board of Education President Jodee Riordan added, “We encourage you to explore all that the Community Ed program has to offer, and take advantage of any and all opportunities that spark your interest. Use the gift of extra time to explore new interests, rekindle old hobbies and passions, and connect with new friends.

“Stay strong Lewiston-Porter, and never stop learning!”

Registration for Lew-Port’s online Community Ed is now open. For more information or to sign up, visit [www.lew-port.coursestorm.com](http://www.lew-port.coursestorm.com) or call 286-7265.

## Intent for land is to build single-family unit

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have a separate account for Greenway money. It’s important the public knows that.”

However, Johnson and Schmelzle are accusing the conservancy of slander for claims that the couple are planning to turn the property into a housing development, which they adamantly deny.

At Tuesday’s Town of Niagara board meeting, the couple insisted it was merely building a single-family dwelling and intend to farm the rest of the acreage. They also denied there was any sort of underhanded deal going on behind the scenes.

“I never thought that the Town of Niagara Farmland Conservancy, whose mission statement even states on their website that it was, ‘Founded to preserve and

protect the increasingly scarce open spaces that give our community a rural feel that we all love,’ would try to stop farmland from being used as just that: farmland,” Schmelzle said. “We were accused of knowing someone with ‘pull’ to be able to acquire this property. We didn’t know anyone that has ‘pull.’ This was a straightforward land purchase. We did nothing wrong. We saw a ‘For Sale’ sign and submitted the bid to a real estate agent not knowing anything about a nature preserve.”

Schmelzle said that because of the accusations, the couple has been under harassment from individuals who oppose a housing development, including an alleged incident where Schmelzle says Town of Niagara

Board member Richard Sirianni gave him the middle finger as he drove by the councilman’s home.

Sirianni vehemently denied the charge, calling it a “total lie” and challenged Schmelzle to take a public polygraph test alongside him.

“I don’t know how I can believe that you’re not going to develop (the site) after your opening statement with me, which I know is false. Anything that comes out of you is going to be totally false. You just ruined your credibility to me,” Sirianni said.

During her time to speak, Johnson offered evidence to demonstrate that the couple had no intentions to build anything beyond the single-family dwelling.

“Just to state (Schmelzle’s) credibility, he did go to the Town Hall so that we could get layouts of the property and we were told to draw up a sketch of where the house would be and how big it would be and he handed those in,” Johnson said. “It showed 2,000 square-feet where we plan to put the house. So it didn’t show any development or anything like that.”

Town Building Inspector Charles Haseley was in attendance and confirmed the claim.

After the meeting, Johnson was asked how the rumor regarding a housing development may have gotten started. Saying she had no idea, she added that neither she, nor Schmelzle were housing developers. Johnson says she is currently a manager of a local Dairy Queen.

When asked the same question, Lasher Winslow said, “(The conservancy was) told by someone in Town Hall, the potential

buyer wanted to know about developing the 20-plus acres. Maybe it was speculation on that person’s part, but that’s when our panic began.” She went on to add that she thought it may have been someone in the building department but couldn’t say for sure.

Lasher Winslow also says that the claim came up during discussions with the Manoe’s realtors, Park Realty, though she admits there could have been confusion there as well, noting “We had four people on our side talking to three people on their side. ... I didn’t speak directly to the realtor about that.”

On Wednesday, Todd Vanderlip said as he was not representing the buyers (Johnson) in the deal, he knew nothing of any possible developments and therefore wouldn’t have speculated on the matter.

In response to Johnson and Schmelzle’s public statements, Lasher Winslow on Thursday said the conservancy was removing all language that referred to a potential land deal from its website, social media, and GoFundMe pages.

When asked about Schmelzle’s point of why the conservancy would fight the decision if the couple was using it to farm, Lasher Winslow said – aside from the possible breach of contract – it was due to the amount of time, effort and stress the group endured during the process. Members couldn’t simply walk away from the project.

She noted that after the group found out about Johnson’s bid, they approached the seller and were told if they could have the cash in an escrow account within

two weeks, they could purchase the property. With the Greenway funds still a few weeks away from being delivered, the group scrambled to raise funds from family members and neighborhood residents, eventually raising \$95,000 which they offered to the Manoe’s. Lasher Winslow said the seller’s never responded to the offer.

She said the ordeal caused some who donated to take out advances on credit cards, incurring hundreds of dollars in subsequent fees. Elsewhere, the short notice caused arguments with some of the group’s family and friends who were apprehensive.

“It’s just ridiculous they made us go through all of these hoops. ...,” Lasher Winslow said. “After thousands and thousands of hours of planning, and meeting with the public – we had four public meetings, and (conservancy president Joan Johnson, no relation) and I went door-to-door and talked to everyone along Miller Road and Garlow Road, as many as we could. ... And we got the money! That’s the thing! ... For two weeks we begged and borrowed and we got the cash. We sent them the bank statements; they didn’t even respond.”

The second reason Lasher Winslow said the group will take the issue to court is because there’s simply no certainty what could happen to the land in the future.

“Anytime in the future, if they decide to sell the property, they could sell it to the next guy and the next guy could develop it. If it goes to the conservancy, it’s forever public land,” she said.

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