

Legislature reviewing 2007 budget hearings

With the community tending to cleanup efforts after enduring hardships from loss of power and sometimes phone service, the county continues to coordinate with local officials and emergency service providers.

Residents who receive food stamps and need to replace food that they lost due to loss of power and refrigeration should have had their cards restored by 73 percent of their monthly food stamp allotment. The county's human services officials (Social Services, health, mental health and senior services) are here to help. Contact your county representative for further information; the county Legislature number is 858-7500. Our compliments go to all community providers for their long hours and hard work.

Due to the extreme weather situation and community priorities, the 2007 county budget process was delayed under the state of emergency. The Legislature's budget hearing process, which began with the submission of the 2007 Erie County executive budget,

is currently under way. The county executive submitted the budget Oct. 18. The 2007 county budget calls for holding the line on taxes while delivering vital services as cost effectively as possible. The Legislature's Finance, Management and Budget Committee is now reviewing each department's operational and capital funding requests. The budget hearing schedule is posted at this direct link: http://www.erie.gov/legislature/budget_process.asp. Hearings will be held in the Legislature's chambers on the fourth floor of 92 Franklin St.

The county Legislature, by charter, has until the first Tuesday of December to adopt a balanced budget. The Legislature continues to focus on financial reform and improving fiscal practices with the Legislature's unanimous approval of a Local Law comprised of the 33 Charter

Review Commission recommendations, which will appear on the county ballot in November. We realize that the final decision will be up to you, the voters of Erie County. We endorse the Erie County Charter revisions that will appear as one package on the Nov. 7 ballot and urge that voters conduct their due diligence, as they have throughout this long, detailed process, and join us in supporting the charter changes.

The Legislature strengthened financial oversight and budgetary structure by increasing the county comptroller's powers, including authorizing the comptroller to declare a deficit, review revenue projections, and allow the Legislature to reduce such projections by a two-thirds majority vote. As always, I welcome feedback. Readers can contact me at my county e-mail at marinelli@erie.gov.



LYNN MARINELLI
Legislature Chairperson



Heard

call: 632-0390

(Editor's note: Call The Bee at 632-0390 and record a one-minute comment on our Bee Heard line. It gives readers an opportunity to comment quickly and candidly on items of local or regional interest. Callers do not have to identify themselves and no callers' names will be used. In the interest of fairness and good taste, The Bee will not publish derogatory or insulting comments. All comments are by our readers and are subject to editing.)

It looks like Supervisor Mohan's unpreparedness and lack of due diligence in researching his facts has turned against Amherst taxpayers again. During the storm, he was a no-show and, in fact, when he did make an utterance, he indicated there would be no garbage pickup in Amherst on Monday. Well, the residents believed him and did not put out their garbage and there was the normal Monday pickup. Now all the food that was destroyed in the thawing of people's personal freezers has

been thrown out but not picked up, so people have to hold on to their rotten food for another week.

To the caller who complained about funding for the D.A.R.E. program, this program is very important and my daughter has benefited tremendously from it. I am very disappointed that my younger daughter will not be able to take advantage of it, because funding has been cut. This program is taught by trained professionals who have far more information about the trends in drug abuse and other types of hazards today than parents could ever have and provide and communicate to their children. It's a shame this program has been cut; it's very important and it's critical to children!

Based on the relative speed in getting here to deal with our emergency, I think the federal government should fire everybody at FEMA and draft the weather network.

I wonder if the owners of the coffee shop on Transit near Premier Liquor would mind explaining

to the people of the Town of Amherst who are in a state of emergency right now why their sprinkler system is on at 3 a.m. watering their bushes. By the way, it's been raining for days! Please adhere to what needs to be done in the town at this time.

I want to thank Quality Markets on Main Street and Manager Joe Palisino for his generous donation that my son and I collected to give to the National Grid people and also the National Guard. We've been walking around with cider and cookies and donuts to show our appreciation, and they made a generous donation for that event. We thank you!

This disaster is a test that is graded pass or fail. There is no doubt that Satish Mohan has been given a huge fail.

A note to Bill O'Loughlin, I hate to agree with Joel Giambra, but this is not the time for your petty politics; you're acting like a spoiled child who did not get his way and your comments are inappropriate and unprofessional. You would be the first person in line to be complaining if Satish Mohan rushed and got this done and if it didn't work out.

I cannot believe someone would take the time and create an interest of note about the volunteer firefighters' salary. Note with interest, volunteers are on call 24/7. They go to mandatory drills, New York State training meetings, fire prevention functions and those middle-of-the-night EMS calls and risk their lives fighting fires. While we do this with much anticipation of reaching the age of 55 to be paid for service, they all do not make 30 years or meet their service requirements. They do it for the love of neighbor and helping others; that is our pay!

I just want to send out a warm thank you to all Amherst officials, police and especially the volunteer firemen. You folks did a fabulous job through this disaster. Keep up the good work. Don't let the turkeys in Bee Heard get you down! I appreciate all you do!

Competitive bidding for tree removal? Are you kidding me? Now is not the time for penny-pinching. Get the resources necessary to deal with this disaster now. I'm willing to pay what's necessary to make our community safe and recover from this disaster as soon as possible.

In response to the caller about the volunteer firemen's pensions: as are all volunteers, my 18-year-old son is out there right now risking his life for free, putting in 24 on and 8 off this past week in extremely more dangerous positions than normal. The pennies it costs us is nothing at the end of their service, and I'll bet this caller never volunteered for anything. Probably just sat back all his life and took!

Well, folks, we got the town supervisor on TV on Wednesday, admitting he does not have enough police to take care of the problems! Now maybe we can get those three officers we desperately need. I hope everyone saw that and writes him and lets him know about it.

Why is it that Bill O'Loughlin and Bill Kindel are constantly berating and arguing with Dr. Mohan? They act like a couple of spoiled kids who whine and complain if they can't have their own way. Dr. Mohan is correct in reviewing bidders' backgrounds; there are a lot of storm chasers and scam artists trying to take advantage of disaster problems. It would be nice if they both learned some manners.

I'm upset that the Williamsville schools might take away spring break because of this outage. They should realize that families get together with other families, friends and relatives for Easter and other reunions; flights are made, cruises are booked. They should petition the board of regents in Albany for a shorter school year due to this emergency or they should take away staff development days or other minor days offs for which people don't have expensive flights and cruises booked.

Dr. Mohan does not understand how government works. He was elected to be town supervisor, not town king. Because of his reluctance to put cleanup on the fast track due to his micro-management style, it's eight days after the storm and still no cleanup, and therefore, the schools cannot open on Monday. Please, let's choose a new supervisor.

After the events of the past week, I can only hope that Supervisor Mohan will reconsider his budget when it comes to eliminating or cutting back emergency services, like the police and highway departments. Without these departments, I don't know what we would have done.

Another fiscal year and another assault on our libraries! After closing 17 libraries last year, the county executive's new budget proposal keeps library funding that was already grossly inadequate at last year's level. This year the attack has spread to the Amherst supervisor. Mrs. Bobinski and the Friends of the Amherst Library worked to find outside funding for Williamsville. As a result, the request for financial aid submitted to the town was less than projected, yet it was eliminated from the budget in its entirety. Williamsville Library is vital to the community, not only as a source of information, but as a center. The refusal by Mr. Giambra and Dr. Mohan to provide funding is an insult to all who worked so hard to keep this vital community resource alive.

It is appalling that Supervisor Mohan provided no funding for the Williamsville Library in his 2007 budget. Doesn't he understand that one year without funding means a key part of our community will be done forever?

Mr. O'Loughlin, you are an embarrassment to the people of Amherst! You need to publicly apologize to Dr. Mohan, and then you, Kindel and Ward should take a hike.

Councilman Bill O'Loughlin panicked and cracked under the pressure of this past week. This tells me he is not fit to lead and he ought to now resign gracefully from our town board.

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