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Comptroller 100 days into the job

by JESSICA L. FINCH
Associate Editor

The first 100 days for Amherst Comptroller Frank Belliotti were anything but routine.

Hired the beginning of August, he started amidst a debate over a \$4 million gap in the 2006 budget and battles for funding of the 2007 budget.

The Town of Amherst's financial status was in the spotlight, and many were looking to Belliotti to make sense of it.

Belliotti accepted the job with more than 40 years experience as an auditor and comptroller. Prior to accepting the position with Amherst he was an auditor and deputy comptroller for the City of Buffalo.

About the time Belliotti took the position, Supervisor Satish Mohan announced that the town had a \$4 million deficit. Some board members disagreed, but Belliotti went through the numbers and reported that the funding was short for 2006.

Taking a look at the books and records, he

said some changes needed to be made.

"I believe that the financial people did their best with reduced staff and managerial changes," he said. "The day-to-day stuff got done, but some things fell behind."

Looking ahead to solve these problems, he said, "We will have some continuity in outside auditors which will help in this transition year."

Belliotti said his job is to give the financial facts. With requirements different between the City of Buffalo and Town of Amherst, Belliotti said he read the state law to see what his role in the town was.

The supervisor, Town Board and departments and the comptroller's office, need to work together for better results, he said.

That includes reviewing spending. He said looking over invoices he is able to see trends that don't make sense. He suggested improv-



Belliotti

ing the purchasing process so invoices are filed when the purchase is made to better track spending. Currently invoices are coming in much later, and this makes it impossible to know what has been spent from the budget.

"There is a slew of (items) already ordered, and the invoices won't come in until January. By then the money is already spent," he said.

Responsible for knowing the town's financial status, Belliotti said he wants to make sure the budget process is done right — which should include a budget officer.

He added that the comptroller reports financial impacts, and it's the Town Board that decides funding for services and how to cut taxes.

"There is no easy way to make up for not having any history in Amherst and its government structure and management, but the 2007
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Williamsville East

Leadership class gets student body to donate to food shelters

by JILL SCHMELZER
Reporter

The Williamsville East High School Youth Leadership Development class has teamed up with Temple Beth Am and North Presbyterian Church to help less fortunate families in the area have a Thanksgiving meal.

Since Nov. 6, students in the class have collected canned goods from members of the student body, who are competing for cash prizes.

"By helping out the less fortunate, you realize a lot of people take this holiday for granted," said sophomore Christianna Chiavetta. "We get to help others have a better holiday."

The classmates have collected cans from each grade. The freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors and members of the school band compete for first place, which is \$100 toward their class treasury.

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Sorting canned goods Friday at Temple Beth Am are Taylor, left, and Morgan Friedman and Meredith Sparks. The drive was coordinated between members

of North Presbyterian Church and Temple Beth Am and students at Williamsville East High School.
Photo by John Rusac

Police tie DNA from Diver murder to 'bike path rapist'

by KIMBERLY M. KARCHER
Clarence Editor

Erie County Sheriff Tim Howard made a haunting announcement during a press conference held on Thursday.

Howard, along with other law enforcement officials, said that DNA has linked the murder of Clarence resident Joan Diver to seven unsolved rape cases and two unsolved rape/murder cases in Western New York.

The crimes are all linked to the perpetrator known as the bike path rapist.

"This is irrefutable evidence," Howard said. "The DNA is a definite connection."

Howard would not disclose

where the DNA was found, other than to say it was not from Mrs. Diver's body, which was discovered near the Clarence/Newstead bike path two days after her Sept. 29 disappearance.

The DNA connection is the first confirmed case of the serial rapist in 12 years. His crime spree can be tracked in the towns of Amherst, Buffalo, Hamburg and now Clarence.

Out of the 10 known assaults, Mrs. Diver is the only victim who was not sexually assaulted, according to police.

DNA has linked seven of these 10 crimes, three of which are homicides, and the remaining three have been linked by the suspect's method of operation.



This sketch of the bike path rapist was composed in 1994. He is now described to be a white male, 37 to 40 years old, five-foot-eight to six feet tall, with dark hair, eyebrows and a mustache.

"This is somewhat shocking information," said Howard, who noted the evidence of the connection was revealed to him late Wednesday evening. "Where has he been for the past 12 years? This has haunted anyone with any knowledge of these crimes."

Howard said the DNA is now being processed through a national DNA database, and the department has received hundreds of leads since Thursday's announcement.

As of Monday morning, police had arrested one individual who skipped out on a parole hearing where he was supposed to provide a DNA swab. Officials said they will continue to arrest

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