

County makes gains in 2006 — more expected in 2007

As 2006 comes to an end, it is time to take a look back at the gains we have made. It was a year that saw the County of Erie regain sound financial footing and make for a bright future. Despite a political climate that predicted higher deficits and doom and gloom, we will end the year with \$30 million in surplus. This was no small feat considering the state mandates we face as a county in New York.

Each year, Albany has shifted more and more financial burden on the local governments, and it has created hardships throughout. 2007 will be a very tough year for our neighbors to the east in Monroe County, facing the type of deficit Erie County went through in 2005. Cuts in services and increased property and sales taxes are the outlook for the Rochester area, but not here in Buffalo.

You can't believe everything you read as the saying goes, and what you hear as well. While the pundits and

media may have forecast a dim future for our county, I am glad to say they were wrong. You as a taxpayer in 2007 will be paying a lower property tax rate than you did in 2000 when we took office. Your roads are better and your bridges safer as we invested in an infrastructure that was crumbling.

We have assembled an emergency response team that is second to none and shined through the October storm. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers are using the Erie County Emergency Operations Center as a model for the rest of the nation.

In fact, Gary Shoffstall of the Corps of Engineers wrote "Nothing succeeds better than good planning.

FEMA has seen a lot of disasters involving debris, and despite a minor glitch here and there, they are impressed with Erie County and how they handled their operations. You get a Gold Star!"

In 2007 we are investing more in cultural activities and restoring some of the services we lost during the 2005 budget crisis. We hope for a new downtown Erie Community College campus and investments on our waterfront. There is every reason to believe that the New Year will be even better than the last.

Erie County is a great place to live and I am proud to be your county executive. Have a Merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah and Kwanzaa and a very healthy and prosperous New Year.



JOEL GIAMBRA
Erie County Executive



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.)

✓To the caller who wants to know about paving Maple Road between Hopkins and North Forest, I have done some intensive research on that, and I'd like to share that information with whomever that person is, but I don't know how to get a hold of you.

✓I want to wish Ms. Rineholt, the new principal at Sweet Home, good luck on her job. I heard a talk show on which one of the 15-year-old students and her mother were supporters of Ralph Phillips, who is a reported killer of New York State troopers. I wish you all the luck, and I hope that this is not an example of the other students from Sweet Home.

✓I've noticed that this column has basically turned into a weekly Satish Mohan support or bash column, depending on your viewpoints. Isn't there anything else to talk about in Amherst?

✓I want to comment on Channel 17's fund-raising. The other night they broadcast "South Pacific," but they gave no information at all. They could have provided a lot about the cast, especially Amherst's own John Chuck was in it. They never gave the background on the stars, just kept telling how moved they are by the singing. Let's have some information like other networks do when they present something, like the background of the performers.

✓I think Dr. Mohan is trying to save money in the wrong departments, like cutting money from the Highway Department. He should look at the double salary payment to the Recreation Department. You don't need two directors making the same amount of money. One of them should go and the money given to other departments so they can get equipment and personnel to get everything done properly.

✓I couldn't believe the ignorant, misguided opinion that hospitals should stay open and why in a

letter to the editor until I turned the page and realized it had been written by a union leader. Typical. Unions are one of the main reasons this area is in the mess it is in. Wake up, people; the status quo isn't working and will just make things worse, if that is possible.

✓I read in the paper about the fight between youths who live on Allenhurst and attend Amherst Central High School. These kids are starting in Windermere. Windermere School is doing everything in their power to get parents involved with these kids and to help these kids have a better home life and better education than what they had when they lived in the city. If the parents don't want it, there's nothing we can do. Now we are having gang fights in the senior high. Something has got to be done! Making parents do homework with the children every night is not helping the kids in how they think; something else has got to be done.

✓The pro and con comments on our Amherst supervisor are becoming tedious and boring to read week after week. Aren't there any more important local issues for discussion besides public personalities? Gripes about taxes produce another big yawn; we already know that they are, like death, inevitable.

✓I notice that the sequence of lights has been changed on Main Street. I live on Linwood Avenue,

and I can barely get out of my street onto Main Street in either direction. I think this causes more of a problem than the sequence previously. It seems like the cars back up all the way. Previously, I was able to wait for the lights to

turn red and was able to turn in either direction. Now, I can barely get out of my street. I would appreciate someone looking into this and checking all the side streets coming onto Main Street. You'll see that the backup is unbelievable.

letters

to the Editor

Village

(Continued from page five)

could be utilized. After all, it is more than just businesses and village residents who benefit from the display. The entire community benefits.

Williamsville is such a charming village, and a lighted business district could be marketed as our own Festival of Lights. There is no reason why the Village can't be a tourist destination such as Niagara-On-The-Lake, though on a smaller scale.

The Hampton Inn, Holiday Motel and Lord Amherst offer enjoyable accommodations, and there are a number of excellent restaurants. There is even theater at Daemen College and Cafe-in-the-Square. Also, South's holiday concert and the Amherst Symphony are always wonderful.

Perhaps the local Chamber of Commerce and/or a committee of volunteers could coordinate December's events and create an advertising campaign to bring tourists into the village. Such a campaign could enlighten the public to view the Village of Williamsville as a travel and shopping destination, rather than just somewhere to drive through. And lighting the trees along Main Street would add to the celebra-

tory atmosphere.

There is such potential in our quaint little village. It is, in many ways, a modern day Bedford Falls. This truly could have been the setting for "It's A Wonderful Life," if only Frank Capra would have found it.

Ellen W. Parisi
Williamsville

Three board members are a joke

Amherstonians need not rent an old "Three Stooges" movie for a night of farce. Just attend a Town Board meeting and listen to three clowns out-ego one another in an effort to be top banana. The saddest comment is that all three have future political aspirations. All three should be forced to resign now!

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BLACK BELT — Terrell Jemison, 14, of Williamsville was awarded the rank of black belt on Dec. 1 at Bill Adams' Martial Arts. Terrell passed the two-day, five-hour, examination for black belt where he demonstrated his knowledge of basics and forms, and also sparred with opponents for 40 minutes and broke boards to show power. He developed a skilled self-defense routine. He has been training for four years.