

letters

to the Editor

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Naval Park is key to development

Everyone I speak with agrees that there is no silver bullet to restore the Buffalo Waterfront. We keep hearing about the Erie Canal Terminus, Bass Pro (right), the proposed \$750 mil-

lion project and on and on. Not very much time or money is given to an attraction that already exists — the Buffalo Naval & Military Park. This park can and will begin to make a difference in 2007. Yet funding to assist in the proper packaging of the history of Western New
(Please turn to page six)

Correction

In the Dec. 27 edition of The Amherst Bee the article, "School nurses are dealing with problems never addressed before" should have read "Health office medication cupboards are filled with asthma inhalers, epinephrine and Benadryl for allergic reactions, glucose monitors, insulin and glucagon for diabetics ..."

The Amherst Chamber of Commerce will be hold its Business After Hours from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 16 at the Buffalo Brew Pub, 6861 Main St., Williamsville. The wrong date was printed in the Jan. 3 edition.

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Last week's question:
Do you agree with the appointment of Roy Wixson as deputy supervisor?

You said:
55% YES 45% NO

How to reach The Bee

The Amherst Bee publishes community news free of charge. Mail items to The Amherst Bee, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY, 14231-0150. Our telephone number is 632-4700. Our fax number is 633-8601. Our Web sites are www.BeeNews.com and www.AmherstBee.com. Amherst Managing Editor David Sherman's e-mail address is dsherman@BeeNews.com. Amherst Associate Editor Jessica Finch's e-mail address is jfinch@BeeNews.com. Senders should state on their contributions whether their e-mail address can be published.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced and are limited to a maximum of 300 words. Names will not be withheld unless the author demonstrates a clear reason for anonymity. No unsigned letters will be printed. You must supply your name, address and telephone number for verification. Authors are limited to one letter every four weeks. Letters are subject to editing.

Our deadline is 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. For engagement and wedding announcements, The Bee offers a form to list names and details. Call for a copy. There is no charge to publish engagements, weddings or anniversaries.


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Another Cuomo waiting in the wings

Is it too early yet to talk about who might be the next governor of New York State? And I don't mean Eliot Spitzer, who has been in the governor's mansion all of 10 or so days about now.

OK, it's probably a little early to decide who might ascend to Albany's throne once Spitzer decides he's tired of the gig. Still, there's a shadow already being cast over the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza that first appeared on Jan. 1, reminding us all that a dozen years later, the Cuomo legacy is alive and well 250 miles to our east.

When Andrew Cuomo recently put his hand on the Bible and became our state's 64th attorney general, one couldn't help but flash back to his father's tenure as our chief executive officer and his son's ambitions to someday sit behind the same desk as did dear old dad.

Without question, the Cuomo gift of gab didn't just trickle down the family tree like spring sap; it descended down more quickly than a barn owl on a field mouse. One of his sons, Chris, is a television reporter for "Good Morning America," and Andrew's oratory skills are akin to popping a tape into the VCR and listening to Mario, who never met a TelePrompTer — or a spending bill — he didn't like.

Getting the Democratic nod for the attorney general's race Andrew eventually won was, at least initially, no slam-dunk. His father's 12-year state tenure didn't end all that well with many longtime Democrats, and the general public has almost forgotten the son's ill-fated attempt to seek the party's 2002 gubernatorial endorsement. Dropping out even before the Democratic primary, his efforts that year also went over as well as John Faso's own recent gubernatorial bid.

Make no mistake, the elder is living vicariously through his progeny, not so much in a visible and out-front kind of manner, but behind the scenes where the former governor has spent the last several years tossing around tons of bricks and mortar in an effort to rebuild the Cuomo name. In the most visible example of Mario's public plan to remain nothing more than a proud but perimeter papa, and in what might have been a first, Mario waved off his son's request to step to the microphones and say a few words on the night

they celebrated Andrew's win over the over-matched Jeanine Pirro.

Widely reported is Cuomo's populist recent stance on legislative member items, promising a review into how each of the 6,000 or so spending items are reported and used. It, of course, has been an early centerpiece of Spitzer's reform package, and the horse is so long ago out of that barn that neither Assembly leader Shelly Silver nor Senate leader Joe Bruno are even bothering to fight the secrecy of that spending any more.

Less widely reported is Cuomo's Day Two pledge to investigate one of Spitzer's first decisions in office, which provides round-the-clock, state-taxpayer-funded security for former Gov. George Pataki. It was hardly a Day One decision that fits Spitzer's image, especially smack dab in the middle of Hevesigate. Presumably, Pataki is a target because he somehow continues to harbor the illogical illusion that 1600

Pennsylvania Avenue will be his new address in a couple of years.

Mario never enjoyed such security coverage, with published estimates for Pataki's safety entourage pegged at a staggering \$20,000 a week. Of course, investigating is a far cry from actual action, and the younger Cuomo's actions will be the foundation of whatever political career he may build, despite the Kevlar-strong coattails he currently is riding.

For now, all he has to do is walk in the yeti-size footprints of both his father and predecessor to ensure the popularity needle continues to crowd into the red side of the dial. But speaking of feet, eventually he'll have to stand on his own two, and only time will tell whether he can separate himself far enough from those two to pull it off.

True enough, Gov. Spitzer might be around for a while, national aspirations notwithstanding. But can Governor Cuomo, the sequel, be that far behind?

(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our Web site at www.wnynewspapers.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)

Redistricting task force seeking input from public

The Sweet Home Board of Education convened a Task Force last March to study the options for potentially redistricting the attendance zones established for the district's four elementary schools.

Elementary enrollment in the district has been declining, especially at Willow Ridge Elementary School and Heritage Heights Elementary School. Based on our analysis of census data, we anticipate this trend to continue.

The population patterns leave the school district in a dilemma because three of the four elementary schools draw students from the most densely populated portion of the district, the northern end.

The northern end of the Sweet Home district encompasses those neighborhoods that lie to the north of North French Road and to the east of Niagara Falls Boulevard.

The northern end of the district was the last area to be residentially developed, and consequently, it was the last area to be assigned attendance zones.

Families who live on the streets that generally surround the elementary schools of Glendale, Willow Ridge, Heritage Heights and Maplemere are assigned to the elementary school in their neighborhood.

Families who live on the streets in the northern end of the district are divided into three elementary schools, Glendale, Willow Ridge and Heritage Heights.

The street divisions were created many years ago, and it is possible for a family who lives on one block to be assigned to one elementary school while a family who lives on a neighboring

block would be assigned to a different elementary school. Over the past 10 years, the northern end of the district has continued to be densely populated with school-age children, whereas many other neighborhoods have experienced a decline in school-age children.

The Task Force is made up of parents, administrators and teachers. Members have spent the past 10 months studying the issues associated with redistricting attendance zones and considering a variety of potential actions.

We enlisted the help of researchers at the University at Buffalo, who plotted individual student addresses with GIS software and ran sets of redistricting simulations using custom optimization software.

UB has been a great help to the process, and the computerized geocoding of data has allowed the Task Force to quickly visualize the impact of various scenarios.

After much deliberation, the Task Force has decided upon recommending a plan that maintains the neighborhood attendance zones surrounding the four elementary schools and that redistricts pieces of the northern end to more equitably balance school sizes.

The final meeting of the Task Force will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 29, in the Norman Vergils Community Center at the high school, 1901 Sweet Home Road.

A formal recommendation will be made to the Board of Education at the Feb. 13 public meeting. I encourage community members to attend either of the meetings in order to provide input.



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Political Columnist



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