



HELPING OTHERS — SS. Peter and Paul students (front row, from left) Matthew Postek, 6, Alyssa LaMartina, 5, Ariana Revelas, 9, and Jimmy Distasio, 8, (back) organize the items donated to the school's collection drive of school supplies and clothing.

Assistant Principal Joanna Mehnert has been organizing the collection 10 years and will deliver the items to Piarist School in Martin, Ky. during the upcoming spring break.

Photo by Jim Smerecak
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Community Plan Committee preps for public forum

by ELIZABETH TAUFA
Reporter

The Williamsville Community Plan Committee is continuing to look at the ideas members will present to the public at an upcoming forum and workshop.

At its March 26 meeting, the committee heard a recap from its consultants on concepts meant to improve various aspects of the village over the next 20 years.

Among the subjects discussed were an economic analysis of the village, transportation alternatives — particularly on Main Street — and alterations to the Mill, Main Street and Spring Street areas.

David Versel of Devonomics reviewed the village's economic situation, noting that the regional economic trends have shifted from manufacturing to services, which has "stifled growth in income, wealth and buying power."

Versel also outlined the existing real estate market conditions in the village.

"The Williamsville area is very desirable, with higher prices than the rest of the region," Versel said in his presentation. "The small size and age of units in the village has kept prices down."

The findings from the market analysis were that

- The office market is stagnant and cannot support new development without incentives
- Strong demand for retail space exists in the village, but space is limited
- There is a mixed demand between regional draw for specialty shops and a neighborhood draw for dining and service
- For the village to meet retail demand, more modern spaces with large floorplates, better pedestrian environment and access to parking and loading are needed
- There is a strong demand for multifamily housing and a need for garaged parking
- There is a potential for more lodging development.

The redevelopment of Main Street was also a topic of conversation between the board and consultants.

Steve Ferranti of SRF Associates spoke on the objective of making the Main Street area more pedestrian friendly, which includes making it easier for pedestrians to cross Main Street.

"Some of the priorities would be getting people across the street easier and using the parks as activity centers for the community," Ferranti said, noting that pedestrian enhancements would make for a more cohesive feel to the village, connecting parks with retail and residential areas.

Among the suggestions for how to achieve a more pedestrian-friendly Main Street, Ferranti proposed the construction of bulb-outs — the widening of sidewalks at the corners so that the distance at which pedestrians cross in the crosswalks is shorter — and a potential median, which would provide pedestrian refuge when not crossing at sidewalks.

"We aren't promoting jaywalking," Ferranti said. "But it does happen."

On-street parking and the widening of sidewalks for more pedestrian traffic were also discussed.

Lawrence Bice of Behan Planning Associates spoke to the board on the area surrounding the Williamsville Water Mill and how the village could possibly use it to create a three-dimensional effect to Main Street, bringing walking traffic down toward the mill where there is a potential for park space or possible retail development.

"A goal might be to change that area into a more walkable type of character," he said, noting that street parking and trees along the street would help to facilitate that. "There's development potential there."

He also noted the need to identify "special character areas" when talking about land development and creating a balance between dynamic open space, village character and appealing living environments for the residents.

The next Community Plan Meeting will be open to the public and will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 24 at Williamsville South High School, 5950 Main St.

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Community News

Williamsville residents Scott Freudenhein and Susan Moran will appear on a program

on WNED through the American Red Cross/Greater Buffalo Chapter, which is producing a series of television programs on elder care giving, an issue of growing concern that affects millions of American families. The program is scheduled to air at 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 11 (WNED-TV) and Monday, April 16 (ThinkBright TV/Time Warner 21). Freudenhein, cares for his mother as well as his mentally disabled son, and is also a dispatcher for senior transportation

services. Moran is the neighborhood director for the Beechwood Homes.

The Art Conservation Department at Buffalo State College, under the direction of Elizabeth Pena of Amherst, has received \$25,000 of matching funds from the Western New York Foundation toward a conservation science endowment, part of a response to a challenge from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Buffalo State College's Art Conservation Department is one of the top three graduate programs in the nation.

GOP endorses Collins for county executive position

The executive committee of the Erie County Republican Committee has endorsed Chris Collins for county executive. The committee voted unanimously to support Collins, who announced his candidacy early last week.

"The Republican Party in Erie County has endorsed a leader, entrepreneur, and reformer to become our next county executive," said James Domagalski, Erie County Republican Committee chairman.

Collins announced his candidacy at Volland Electric in Cheektowaga last week. Several years ago, Volland Electric was in financial distress before Collins stepped in to help stabilize the company,

which saved 110 local jobs.

"Erie County needs a chief executive, not another chief politician," said Collins following the endorsement meeting. "Politicians have controlled Erie County government for decades, and they have continuously resisted reform and failed to create economic opportunity for our community. I know how to turn troubled companies around, and I think it is time to take the same approach and apply it to Erie County government."



Collins

Guidelines for the 2007 Congressional Art Competition posted on Web site

High school students from across Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming counties are invited to participate in the 2007 Congressional Art Competition.

"Year in and year out, our district has so many gifted young artists, that it's always very difficult to choose a winner," Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds, R-Amherst, said. "I don't expect this year to be any different. I'm always amazed by the high level

of artistic talent displayed by our high school students."

The winning student from Reynolds' district, to be selected in early May, will have his or her artwork displayed in the Cannon Tunnel of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., for the coming year.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony with district winners from across the country will be held in Washington this summer. The winner may also receive two

round-trip plane tickets to Washington, D.C., from Southwest Airlines to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new display in the U.S. Capitol Building. The winning student may also be eligible for a Savannah College of Art and Design scholarship.

Participating students may choose from seven artistic categories: painting, drawing, collage, print, mixed media, computer-generated art or photography. The art pieces will be selected first at the county level, then at the district level. Two honorable mention selections will be displayed in the Congressional District offices of Reynolds for the year.

Interested participants should contact their high school art teacher or county art council for more information. For guidelines and rules, visit the Web site www.reynolds.house.gov.

The first congressional art competition was held in 1982. Since then, hundreds of thousands of high school students have participated in the contest across the country. The winning entries from last year's competition currently hang in the Cannon Tunnel at the U.S. Capitol.

"This unique competition provides the opportunity to view outstanding student artwork on both a local and national level," Reynolds said. "It's something I look forward to every year."

Students compete in spelling bee

The Western New York Elementary Spelling Bee for grades first through fifth was held at Maple East Elementary School on March 24. Due to a large number of enrollees, there were two bees held for the second and third grades. The first, second and third grade winners will go on to the State Bee competition to be held in Weedsport, N.Y. on April 28.

The winners are as follows: First grade: first place — Andrew Young, Maple East; second place — Christine Yu, Heim Elementary; third place — Anupama Iyer, Heim.

Second grade (two separate bees): first place — Julia Cornwell, Country Parkway, and Swetha Sathi, Forest Elementary; second place — Isobel Seabrook, Zena, and Marisa Johnson, both from Forest Elementary; third place — Tyler Papham, Heim, and Sumayyah Haq, Country Parkway.

Third grade (two separate bees): first place — Nabeel Rahman, Maple East, and Ananya Nrusimha, Heim; second place — Melissa Helm, Heim, and Katie Eaton, Country Parkway; third place — Anawya B. Murthy, Country Parkway, and Abby Larson, Heim.

Fourth grade: first place — Mandela Namaste, Maple East; second place — Robin Marshall, Heim; third place — Caroline Sharp, Heim.

Fifth grade: first place — Dougie Pluta, Transit Middle; second place — Richard Patti, Transit Middle; third place — Audrey Sharp, Heim Middle.