

Cultural, arts funding vital to economic development

Among the non-mandated services funded in the Erie County budget are arts and cultural organizations. As the County Legislature works to improve our financial situation and add to our quality of life, cultural funding is a major agenda item. The 2007 budget, as amended by the Legislature, allocates \$5,362,976 for 34 organizations.

The arts and cultural organizations, which employ hundreds of people and generate millions of dollars in business and taxes, have had to work under the uncertainty of if and/or how much funding they will receive each year. I have been a strong advocate of cultural and arts organization funding, as well as cultural tourism, for many years, and the recently proposed plan to commit to 3 percent of the property tax levy to steady state funding of the cultural and arts organizations is a good start.

I have supported dedicated funding for our cultural and arts organizations for years, including when I was a member of the staff of the late Assemblyman William Hoyt and worked on a proposal for the sharing of a

portion of the sales tax to be dedicated to the cultural organizations.

Cultural tourism can be a key component of improving Erie County's economy and is very important to economic development. The county has cultural gems such as the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Buffalo Zoo, the Frederick Law Olmsted Parks system, the Darwin Martin House, Shea's Performing Arts Center and wonderful architecture and destinations. These facilities attract people who patronize restaurants, hotels, sporting events and other businesses.

It is incumbent on the County Legislature, as the fiscal house in county government, to make prudent funding decisions and to continue our progress in reforming fiscal practices and how Erie County conducts its business. Dedicating this funding for the cultural and arts organizations is a way to make a positive,

important investment in our community that will result in increased tax revenues, more businesses and jobs being created and an improved reputation for Erie County to both our residents and to visitors.

I am pleased to report that the updated and improved Erie County Charter is now available at www.erie.gov/laws/eccode/. The county is awaiting bids on a new publication of the Erie County Charter, Code and Miscellaneous Local Laws. I will keep readers informed on the progress of the new publication of the charter and documents, which I fought hard to update in order to improve the functions of the county. The reforms were overwhelmingly approved by the County Legislature last year and then approved by more than 70

percent of the voters in November. As always, your opinions are important to me. Call me at 832-0483 or e-mail 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.)

After seeing the yard debris still remaining at the curb in the

Town of Amherst, I wonder if the budget cuts that the supervisor made to the highway department are really worth the tax savings. I don't think so.

I just put another couple hundred-dollar scratches in my car from the branches that are sticking out on the high-speed Sheridan Drive main thoroughfare through the Town of Amherst. These aren't branches hanging from trees; these are branches sitting on the side of the road for more than a month now — still debris from the October storm. It's a disgrace. This year, we have an opportunity to hold Bob Anderson to his job, because he's up for re-election. Unfortunately, we have another full two years before we can tell Mohan what we think of the non-job he's doing.

What a break for Amherst residents, especially in the highway department, with the woman running for highway superintendent. Maybe now we can get all the water receivers that are sinking fixed and all the trees and limbs picked up and our streets swept.

It has been 10 months since the October storm, and yet the Williamsville Public Works has not removed fallen trees blocking the Ellicott Creek dam, which pedestrians can easily see when walking on the Main Street bridge. The result is that water is not flowing around Island Park just as the season for public events brings crowds of people to enjoy the park. Though our storm problems are nothing compared to those of Katrina, both weather-related events highlight government's inefficiency and the lack of accountability in dealing with storm cleanup.

I have a cost-saving idea for the town. Let's not cut down any

trees unless they are an immediate danger to a structure or street. So many of the trees that have been pegged in our neighborhood to be cut down look fantastic; we've had a private arborist come through and tell us that one or two may be going next year, but to wait and see. I think the town needs a wait and see on this. If you cut down trees, you're going to ruin property values and lose the look and feel of the town, and people are going to be very upset.

I'd like to comment on the police blotter traditionally printed in The Bee. I'd like to see an actual police blotter with what our Town of Amherst officers are really doing out there and the arrests they are making. Certainly there must be many arrests made weekly. I'd like to see a bit of reality instead of the goofy things. I'd like to see an actual police blotter. They should post the names of the people arrested in our town and what they even act as a deterrent.

I am sick and tired of all the callers complaining about the trees not being picked up. They are doing the best they can, and I think they are doing a fantastic job.

These pictures in The Bee really kill me of all the students attending their prom. All these guys with the ties off, tuxedo coats off, shirttails hanging out, sleeves rolled up. They look like they are at a picnic, not their prom. Where are the parents of these kids? Why don't tell them that when they are dressed, they should stay dressed?

I have a question for the village board regarding renting out the white house down by the mill. Did they let anyone else know about, or is this just a friend of theirs they are renting the place to? If the village is going to lease any space that is owned by the community, they need to offer it to other people. This worries me.

I recently attended the Sacred Heart Academy graduation, held at the UB Center for the Arts. There were 122 gorgeous, young ladies who graduated; they were dressed in long, white gowns and carried a dozen red roses. The gentleman who presented the diplomas to these young girls asked the audience to hold their applause until all the diplomas were presented. It was disgusting to hear that a certain few had to hoot and holler and even whistle when some of the graduates were handed their diplomas. I feel this was a disgrace to have this happen at a classy, dignified, beautiful affair. Shame on those who disregarded the request.

It's time to put some kind of tax or charge on the excessive garage sales going on, causing lots of traffic in residential areas and also leaving the debris of their signs all over. It's a complete disregard for fellow residents.

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letters

to the Editor

Motorists to watch

(Continued from page five)

call 845-8788.

These streets in Amherst, Clarence, Newstead and Akron will have heavy bicycle traffic: Dodge, Clarence Center Road, Stahley, Herr, Keller, Utley, Hunts Corner, Dye, McNeely, Hake, Parkview, Skyline, State Street, East Avenue, Crittenden, Carney, Cedar, Ditch, Bartell, Salt, Johnson, Griswold, Fisk, Akron, Ertman, Block Church, Burdick, Kelkenberg, Rapids, Crego, Berghorn, Delaware, Wolcott,

Kenfield, Green Acres, Country and Audubon Parkway. Dodge Road from Sweet Home Road to Audubon Parkway will be closed from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Tonawanda streets/bike paths that will have bike traffic from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, June 23: Canalway Trail bike path, Creek-side, Pineview Road, Niagara Street, Niawanda Park bike path, Two-mile Creek bike path, Fletcher, Hinds, Broad, Young, Fremont, Fillmore and East Niagara.

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*Source: Supplemental Questions to the Search Institute Survey of Student Attitudes and Behaviors Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth - Town of Amherst Schools, Winter 2005/2006

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