

letters



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Town Centre plan is senseless

The proposal for commercial development of the former Buffalo Shooting Club property is a huge mistake. It is inappropriate for a residential neighborhood, and paradoxically, it defies, even mocks, Amherst's own Comprehensive Plan.

It is time for our elected officials to "just say no" to senseless commercial development. It is time to hold developers accountable for filling their empty properties before building new ones to house the same type of businesses. Currently, there are 18

empty properties along a three-mile stretch on Maple Road. This includes thousands of square feet of office space, one of which is 8,500 square feet.

It is time to understand that Amherst has reached a point of diminishing returns. This is not "smart development." This will not attract people. People are fleeing. They will continue to flee as long as our town continues to cater to commercial developers and big businesses and not to the needs and desires of its loyal, taxpaying citizens.

History has shown that this site will eventually display many

(Please turn to page six)

Presidential primaries providing pundits with points to ponder

We're just days away from "Super Duper Tuesday" when 22 states hold presidential primary elections in a year when there are still no clearcut favorites for both the Democratic and Republican nominations.

With that in mind, we are all aware that there is so much information to peruse when it comes to the candidates from both sides of the aisle.

In an effort to make your life a little bit easier, I've searched through many a newspaper, listened to plenty of talk radio and visited countless Web sites, collecting various news nuggets and factual tidbits that hopefully you can use to help solidify who you believe should be our country's next commander-in-chief.

Here are some talking points, a few random thoughts and a couple of items of interest as we head toward crunch time:

Can't help but start off with a personal thought to say how surprised I was to hear that only a couple hundred people showed up for Bill Clinton's appearance in downtown Buffalo a couple of weekends ago.

Sure, the event followed a fancy fundraiser for his wife held earlier in the day and took place late on a frigid Sunday night right smack dab in the middle of the Packers-Giants NFC Championship football game, but I don't think I am the only one shocked that only 200 Democrats showed up at a free event featuring a former president.

Gotta love the corporate media. The deep-pocketed folks from about a half dozen big businesses are really the ones who decide who are the "favorites" to win the nominations. They have the power, influence and money to identify and therefore label who they think are "electable" by repeatedly banging us over the head with who they view as the top dogs while at the same time telling voters who are the "underdogs" that have virtually no chance of winning.

You see it on cable television with networks such as CNN, MSNBC and FoxNews, and you read it in newspapers such as USA Today, the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal. We are told to pay attention only to those deemed to be the most "electable" and ignore the minor candidates. It's almost as though they want the election to be over before it really begins.

Let's not forget the most important part of any election and the real reason why most winning candidates were able to get elected: he or she had the most money. That's just the way it works in our country in this day and age.

If you have money you have the ability to advertise. And if you have the ability to advertise, you're golden when it comes to reaching the masses through the magic of television. The facts don't lie. Approximately 95 percent of congressional elections and around 85 percent of Senate elections since 1960 have resulted in the top fundraising candidate winning, thanks to the power of the boob tube.

I can't write a column like this and not mention Ron Paul and his "Hope for America" campaign.

The Republican promising to serve our nation "for peace and liberty" has an impressive resume when it comes to his voting record on the Patriot Act and the Iraq war (he voted against both) as well as saying no to any proposal to raise congressional pay or increase our taxes, and he's also dead against anything that he believes violates the Constitution.

But the really interesting little tidbit I found out about the congressman from Texas has to do with his work as a flight surgeon for the Air Force and the fact that he has delivered more than 4,000 babies. There's a joke there somewhere. I'll let you fill in the blank with that one.

We spoke of money before, so for those keeping score at home, at last glance it was estimated that Hillary Clinton has about \$92 million in the bank while Barack Obama has approximately \$83 million in his campaign coffers.

I first heard about the Federal Communications Act of 1934 during a class I took at college, so when I recently heard a reference to it my ears perked up since it had been about a decade since I saw, read or heard anything about it.

But a judge from Nevada did make a ruling that NBC violated that piece of legislation by excluding Dennis Kucinich from a televised debate earlier this month. The judge's decision, which came hours before the debate was about to begin, was easily sidestepped by NBC's higher-ups when they broadcast the debate on MSNBC and pulled it from the local station based in Nevada. Nothing to see here folks. Move along.



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Political Columnist

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State of the town 'robust, strong'

All post-October 2006 disaster tasks have been completed, except for the felling of trees. We are waiting for the spring season to watch their revival before we make decisions on felling. To date we have spent \$17.6 million.

Our 2008 budget increased by 2 percent to \$115.8 million. All of the 2008 budget increase was caused by rising personnel costs. If we continue the past trend, our budget will grow by 46 percent to \$170 million in 2020.

Looking at our nation's state of economy, I will propose that we freeze the budget at the current level for two years. Council Member Guy Marlette suggested this action; I am hoping other council members will rise to the occasion.

During 2007, our total taxable assessed value increased by \$83 million to \$7 billion. Construction activity in 2007 was valued at \$149 million, milder than in previous years. Single-family homes took the biggest hit, while multi-family residences increased by more than \$15 million.

In 2007, we approved 33 new projects worth \$176 million. Of these, five were residential projects and 21 commercial projects. The projects included 225 student housing units.

Our infrastructure is aging. We will spend \$1.3 million on the sanitary sewer treatment plant, \$1.3 million on rehabbing the broken sewer lines, and \$1.9 million for replacing five weaker sections of water supply lines.

A townwide drainage plan is in progress. In 2008, we will install a sluice gate on Ditch 26-B and build two detention ponds. We will also replace the Rambling Road bridge to relieve flooding in Ransom Oaks.

To help the situation with sinking homes, we earlier reduced the assessments of 287 seriously damaged homes by \$14.3 million. Last year the state legislated a five-year graduated tax abatement on the cost of renovation.

Statistics on crimes showed a mixed trend in 2007. Drug-related incidents dropped by 15 percent, firearm incidents by 15 percent, burglaries by 26 percent, rape cases by 45 percent and property crimes by 9 percent. Two types of crimes went up: violent crimes by 6 percent and robberies by 48 percent.

In order to retain young Western New Yorkers at home, we are working on starting co-op programs between UB and local industry. Students will work full time in industry in between their semesters. Several of these students will end up getting permanent jobs. We will also work on establishing such co-op programs with other colleges.

Amherst does not have a cultural center, while UB has a top-class Center for the Arts. We are working with the University to open this center to Amherst residents. Nonacademic and popular cultural programs could be offered at this UB center to the town residents.

Amherst continues to be one of the safest cities in America. We have excellent youth services, senior services and recreation programs. We have a fund balance of \$12 million in our treasury. I want to assure my fellow Amherstonians that today the town's financial status is robust, and the state of their Town of Amherst is strong. During my tenure as your supervisor, I will keep working diligently, honestly and selflessly to make the state of your town stronger.



SATISH MOHAN

Amherst Supervisor