

Working to increase perspectives, decrease costs

In my campaign for county executive, I pledged to bring common sense to Erie County government. As I pass my first month and a half in office, I am pleased to report that my administration is applying common sense to every issue that comes before us. Common sense starts with asking the right questions and not accepting the answer "because that's how we've always done it."

While the county certainly has large financial obstacles to face in the coming years, I think it is also important to focus on small, largely symbolic spending. As county executive I am not using a county vehicle for personal use, and I am using my own personal cell phone.

Erie County pays for more than 830 cell phones, and certain employees have county take home vehicles. I have asked my commissioners and department heads to justify all of the cell phones and county vehicles assigned to their departments. There are certainly county employees who perform vital services around the clock, 365 days a year. It is important that these

professionals have the tools they need to do their jobs safely and promptly.

However, common sense tells me that an employee who spends the vast majority of his or her day in a county building and is not on-call after hours should not need a county cell phone. It is my hope that after reviewing the justification worksheets, we will be able to cut the number of county cell phones by half and offer pool cell phones for employees to sign out when they are leaving the office on business. I am also confident we will be able to reduce the number of county take home vehicles and instead have people use a county pool vehicle while conducting off-premises county business.

While I work to make both large and small changes to the way county government operates, it is also my intention to invite more Erie County taxpayers to help me find solutions.



CHRIS COLLINS

Erie County Executive

The office of county executive has the ability to appoint more than 400 people to volunteer board positions. It is my hope to appoint as many fresh faces as possible in a deliberate effort to generate new ideas and perspectives. To open up the board appointment process and make selection transparent, a full list of board appointments is now available on Erie County's Web site www.erie.gov. There is a link on our home page that will allow you to view a complete list of boards with descriptions, the number of appointments I make to each board, and an online application form.

There is no formal deadline for submission because board terms vary in length and appointments will be made on a rolling basis. If you feel you have expertise or insight to share or have a passion for a particular issue impacting our community, I would encourage you to apply and help me reform Erie County government.



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.)

My taxes have gone up approximately \$300, and my school taxes have gone up the equivalent. You can't afford to live in a decent house in Amherst and retire unless two things happen: you are wealthy and you inherit a lot of money. It's unfortunate that only people can live in Amherst who are working with an excellent job or who have extreme wealth from pensions, inheritance, etc., but the normal person can't seem to retire and live in a nice house in Amherst.

In response to Dan Ward announcing that once again he is running for another political office, Dan, the only "myriad problems" the people in this community have are politicians like you with your agendas. Why don't you try getting a job in the real world instead of running for one seat after another in local government? Maybe then you'll figure out that the people really just need you politicians to stay out of our lives.

There I was sitting in the restaurant, eating my spaghetti and really enjoying it, when along came a big fat rat and sat down beside me. (Well, not really, it was outside the window.) What are

these restaurants going to do about cleaning up their act using their totes, etc? And, close the gate to the garbage disposal. The rats are really enjoying it. Don't expect us residents to do it all; we don't want any restaurants to have seating quarters for rats.

The IDA tax breaks to companies moving to Amherst is a scam, with resident taxpayers the victims. There are no real economic benefits to the town. All this means is added services, more traffic and residents paying more taxes to cover what these companies moving here should pay. It's corporate welfare at taxpayer expense.

I have a child who plays Amherst Youth Hockey at the Pepsi Center. Amherst residents are fortunate to have such a wonderful facility in our town, but there is a problem. It's filthy; I don't even like to sit down and watch his games. Patrons leave their trash everywhere, and the Pepsi Center should have someone to clean locker rooms. It smells really bad. We recently attended a tournament in Ontario and had the opportunity to be hosted at two different rinks that are much older than the Pepsi Center. Their rinks are immaculate. We hear all the news about MRSA and staff infections; let's get this once-beautiful facility cleaned up.

When is the Amherst Town Board going to wake up and support projects that will benefit the entire town? Maple Road is not a residential area, unless one considers a shooting club a residence. It always amazes me to hear those who do not own property tell those who do what they

can or cannot do with it.

To the caller who reported a decrease in their tax bill, you are one of the fortunate ones. Friends from Willow Ridge, Eggertsville and Williamsville all report to me an increase in the past two years. One friend from Snyder reported a \$6 decrease for this year.

I am so sick of the high taxes in Amherst. I can't readily recall what Supervisor Mohan said in his campaign promises about taxes, but whatever he said, I am completely fed up, and I am so disappointed in Amherst residents who just shrug their shoulders and say, "That's the way it is."

It seems crime is drastically increasing in the Town of Amherst. If the town justices spent more time in court, instead of worrying about their own law practices, things might improve.

I'm sure Dr. Mohan, as well as most people in the real world, know how unions work. The slackers are protected and get the same wage benefits as do the hard workers, and then it's gimme, gimme, gimme at the bargaining table.

It seems like one in every five cars that comes down our street either has a loud muffler or loud pipes. I wish the Amherst Police would start cracking down on it, like Buffalo has. It comes under the quality of life issue.

I wonder if you checked with the Amherst IDA to determine why there have been problems in the past two years collecting the payments in lieu of taxes. Did the town fail to bill accurately for special district tax during the time Satish Mohan has been supervisor?

Councilman Guy Marlette is looking for fresh ideas from fresh voices. This will only happen if the council passes Councilman Ward's bill to limit the term of office of members of town committees.

letters

to the Editor

Listen before

(Continued from page five)

instead of listening and learning about how this project could be successful for our town, a few outspoken residents are outright opposing it.

Benderson Development deserves a chance to educate the community about this project, but instead the same voices that are against any kind of sustainable growth in Amherst have surfaced once again.

For once in Amherst, let's look at the merits of a development project and see where there is

room for compromise so that the project's impacts, such as traffic, are addressed. The proposed Amherst Town Centre will be a true community asset that will generate benefits for Amherst and its taxpayers, similar to other areas where these developments exist. Our elected representatives on the Town Board owe Benderson the opportunity to present its case without the injection of hyperbole used by a small minority that are against any type of development in our great town.

**Deborah Notto
Summist Square
Amherst**

2008 Congressional Art Competition seeks student submissions

The 2008 Congressional Art Competition is under way. Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds, R-Amherst, encourages high school students from across Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming counties to participate and make submissions.

"Year in and year out, our district has so many gifted young artists, that it's always very difficult to choose a winner," Reynolds 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 Western New York high school students."

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 Building in Washington, D.C.

The winning student from Reynolds' district, to be selected in May, will have his or her artwork displayed in the Cannon Tunnel for the coming year. An awards ceremony with district winners from across the country will be held in Washington this summer. The winner will receive a round-trip plane ticket to Washington, D.C. from Southwest Airlines to attend the awards ceremony for the new display. The winning student will 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 Reynolds congressional district offices for the year.

Students should contact their high school art teacher or county art council for more information. A link to contest guidelines and rules is also available on the congressman's Web site at <http://www.reynolds.house.gov/>.

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School News

SS. Peter and Paul School's eighth grade class of 2008 high school scholarship winners were: Kathleen Ruggiero, Christine Colson, Hope Genco, Hollie Canacari, Bart LaFaso, Olivia Jakson, Rachel Spencer, Samantha Basile, Samantha Hathaway, Elisha Teibel, Victoria Erdman, Alexis Parry, Christina Seitz, John Zummo, Matthew Nelson, Tom Maleck, Brian Windschitl, Andrew Skywark, Jamison Powell and Maury Fields.