

# State of County address communicates vision of future

Last week, I delivered my first State of the County address. It was a chance for me to reassert my commitment to county taxpayers, acknowledge the work we have accomplished in the last three months and communicate my vision for the future of Erie County.

The hardworking taxpayers of Erie County are thirsty for change and positive action. Last November, they voted for change. A change in how we approach government and the vital services we provide. A change in how we treat taxpayers and their hard-earned dollars. And a change from the failed leadership of career politicians to an era of effective and efficient government managed by people who know what it takes to deliver.

In my address, I was able to clearly detail the cost-saving initiatives we have unveiled. At the top of that list is Six Sigma. Hundreds of county employees are beginning to learn the Lean Six Sigma process and how it will positively impact their daily work and Erie County's bottom line. We expect this effort to mush-

room as newly trained employees impact other employees. We are empowering our workforce through Lean Six Sigma as we bring efficiency and a customer focus to the Rath Building. With the pilot funding we have today, we can expect approximately \$1.1 million in Six Sigma savings in 2008 alone. The more we invest, the greater the return. I know our approach will not only reduce the cost of government but also boost employee morale. I encourage county employees to embrace this opportunity and for the Legislature and Control Board to continue to support this initiative. If we work together, I am confident Erie County can become the first Six Sigma community in America — setting an example for struggling municipalities nationwide.

Our community needs to look to the future. That is why I used my address to remind people of the necessity of negotiating new union contracts that



**CHRIS COLLINS**

Erie County Executive

make sense in 2008 and can be sustained for the next 50 years. Every Erie County union contract has expired. My door is open, and I look forward to fair negotiations. The key word is "fair." Fair to the hardworking employees who deserve a raise and fair to the hardworking taxpayers who pay their wages and benefits.

Our focus on the future also includes making the much-needed investments in our roads, bridges, parks, beaches and community college campuses. These vital assets have been neglected — victimized by broken budgeting and inferior planning. It would take a total federal, state and county

investment of hundreds of millions of dollars to make the necessary repairs. Over the coming months, I will make bold proposals to meet these investment challenges head-on.

To read the full text of my State of the County address, please visit [www.erie.gov](http://www.erie.gov).



## 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.)*

✓ On March 27, Forest Elementary School held its annual student talent show at South High School. The performance by the students was great, but shame on the man talking on his cell phone, the man playing on a handheld game, the women talking among themselves, and big shame on the mothers who permitted preschool children to run up and down the aisles hollering. Where are the manners and respect for the students and teachers during the performance? This is for your kids; let's make it a special performance night next year.

✓ I feel the town should fire the grant writer due to the fact that the town has been wasting money on services not being completed. Paying \$38,000 in fees is ridiculous. Another company should be

considered to handle the workload and actually obtain grant money for the town that is desperately needed.

✓ At the town board meeting on March 17, a Sweet Home high school senior spoke before the town board and said he was in favor of the proposed commercial development at the former shooting club site because his school district would receive \$1 million in taxes. I wonder how he found this to be true. I wonder if he even knows it is true. I wonder if this senior has been taught that it's OK to repeat things that aren't true, as long as it sounds good. Hillary Clinton likes to do that a lot, until she gets caught by the media.

✓ I live in Dana Heights, and we have gas street lights. Since the last two heavy wind storms within the last two months, a lot of lights have gone out. I've called National Fuel who has come and repaired some of the lights, but not all of them. Who can fix these lights once and for all? There are probably a quarter of the gas street lights out in Dana Heights. Can anyone help?

✓ Amherst Supervisor Satish Mohan is now more than halfway through his first four-year term as supervisor. He is already talking about breaking his campaign promise and running for another term for supervisor, which is totally up to him. However, after two years on the job, Supervisor Mohan does not seem to be learning anything. In fact, it's readily apparent to any observer that he merely stumbles from one self-created crisis to another. With the way he treats employees and the way he handles union contracts, those things left pending turn into lawsuits and arbitration proceedings

where the town loses its ability to negotiate. He receives a grade of D- on his mid-term report card.

✓ To the general manager of the Pepsi Center: you are blaming the filthiness at the Pepsi Center on we, the people, who pay approximately \$500 for our sons and/or daughters to play there. He never mentioned that there are steps that are decaying that could post a serious injury. He is not taking responsibility. We expect a clean facility when we take our child to the Pepsi Center.

✓ I'm a lineman from Potsdam, N.Y. working and staying in a local motel. I love this area, as we were here during the mini ice storm in 2000 and the October 2006 snowstorm, but the drivers here are very impatient. I drive a CDL Class A truck and I am cut off by cars at least five times a day. We cannot stop these trucks on a dime, so I wish you would understand that before you cause an accident. If you are late for work, leave 10 minutes earlier. Nothing is so im-

portant that you need to get into an accident or cause one.

✓ Williamsville School District voters, why should taxpayers pay \$250 per athlete or scholar for state competition? And that \$250 is now added to the budget cost of \$780,000 which we must pay. I urge all taxpayers to revolt and remove the 10 school principals and 10 assistant principals, along with all student counselors. Let's all revolt, and vote down the budget until it reaches a zero percent increase.

✓ When are Amherst Town Board members going to vote for what the voters want and not Bendorson? The voters put these board members in office, not Bendorson. What are each board member getting in return for their yes vote? We in the immediate area of the former shooting club site do not want any commercial building on this site. Residents only. We don't need any hotels, restaurants, theatres or stores. A theatre complex on Maple Road

has already been torn down. I am sick and tired of board members voting for what they want, and not listening to the people. Let's bring back tar and feathers for politicians who do not do the bidding of the people.

✓ I am very upset with our Amherst Highway Department. I live in the Village Green area and the day of the big snowstorm several weeks ago the highway department removed a stump and left all the clippings. They still have not returned to clean up the mess.

✓ Why do Town of Amherst employees spend so much time and gas driving from one job site to another? Would a private business grind one tree stump on a street, skip the next four and return a month later to grind one more tree stump and leave again? Where do they drive to? Would a private contractor be so inefficient? Private business can't pay for 14 holidays a year, higher-than-median wages, health insurance, etc.

## Letters

### to the Editor

#### Signals

(Continued from page five)

the green and arrow cycles longer so the cars don't have to wait over and over at a red light. To me, they contribute to the unsafe conditions at intersections.

People don't mind waiting a few seconds more when they know the traffic at a signal will cycle through the intersection.

Usually, a well-placed intention becomes a fundraiser for any town or city, and then the politicians are more interested in how much money is made per intersection. Giving a summons or ticket to a violator should teach a lesson to the violator; however, the reductions in moving violations to parking tickets in the court systems of today make my point. This practice only makes the vehicle and traffic laws point-

less to the police officer. One could sit at any stop sign, or signal intersection, anywhere in the U.S.A. and observe drivers passing through without observing the traffic control devices. Cameras go a long way in assessing traffic conditions and accidents; however, cameras at intersections created for collecting fines for signal-runners are another fee for government to indirectly place their hand in your pocket.

Has anyone noticed when a police car is present at an intersection, the drivers don't violate the law?

**Vincent Delgato**  
Retired police officer

### O'Connell defends company's status

It is with great dismay that I read the letter to the editor that you published on April 2, 2008, by Phil Rico, berating my grants consulting firm. Perhaps before erroneous articles are printed, it would be better to investigate their authenticity. The first thing that needs to be known is that Mr. Rico is a past employee of my firm who is now working for another grants consulting firm that is interviewing to obtain the Town of Amherst grants consult-

ing contract.

Secondly, Mr. Rico would not even have this career except for the fact that he learned it at my firm. He is also ill-informed, as I have many local clients, as well as clients all across New York State. My firm's ability to raise millions of dollars for my clients can be seen by accessing my Web site, [www.grantsareus.com](http://www.grantsareus.com). And as for losing the contract previously, Mr. Rico is aware that another employee took it away from me, and what he does not know is, three years later, she threw in the towel because she could no longer work with the town. And I quote from her letter dated May 30, 2006, to Supervisor Satish Mohan, "We find that we are no longer able to conduct our normal course of business given the frequent delays in acquiring approvals to proceed with grant applications..."

For 20 years I have provided grants consulting services to many satisfied clients, and to print something that bashes my reputation leaves me heartsick. This firm employs nine people and continues to expand to meet the needs of an ever-growing client base. And for Mr. Rico to make the statements that he has, without any real information about my work for Amherst, makes me wonder how anyone could employ him.

**Jean K. O'Connell**  
J. O'Connell & Associates  
Grants Consultants

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## Community News

**Raymond W. Walter**, has been appointed to a three-year term on the board of the Amherst Senior Citizens Foundation Inc. Walter lives in East Amherst and is an associate with the law firm of Magavern Magavern Grimm. He specializes in elder law, as well as estates and trusts law.