

Courier-Standard-Enterprise

THE WEEK OF JULY 19-25, 2019

CANAJOHARIE-FORT PLAIN-ST. JOHNSVILLE, N.Y. USPS 087980

75 CENTS

Canal cyclists pass through local villages

By JOSHUA THOMAS
C-S-E Editor

Starting early Friday afternoon and continuing through the evening, 650 cyclists from across the world travelled through western Montgomery County during the 21st annual Cycling the Erie Canal Bike Tour, which saw participants pedaling 400 miles during a week-long journey from Buffalo to Albany.

Local individuals volunteered their time to hand out water and provide information in Canajoharie, Fort Plain and St. Johnsville at local stops along the Erie Canal Bike Trail, with cyclists concluding their daylong, 60 mile journey by traversing the largest hill of the trip in the

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CYCLISTS, Page 7



Joshua Thomas
ABOVE: BJ Costello, of Albany, and his son Kevin Costello, from just outside Boston, Mass., have participated in Cycling the Erie Canal together about six times. RIGHT: Shults Agency Insurance Agent Brenda Krutz (left) and Insurance Agent/Account Representative Paula Brown hand out water in Fort Plain Friday.



Root may be fined by state

Settlement proposed in marriage dispute

By DEBORAH BUCK
For the C-S-E

ROOT — During July's Root Town Board meeting, Attorney Robert Subik reported on communication received from the NYS Division of Human Rights, which launched an inquiry into Town Clerk Sherrie Eriksen's stated refusal to issue an on-the-spot marriage license to a local gay couple for religious reasons last summer.

The NYS Division of Human Rights has proposed a settlement with the town consisting of seven points. The settlement, according to Subik, is an attempt to avoid having to launch a full-blown hearing.

Subik said that while the town board is in agreement with six of the outlined points, they disagree with the seventh, which stipulates that the town must pay a substantial, as-yet-undisclosed fine. Subik said the town is "in no position" to pay the proposed fine, a statement which he also made in a response to the

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143rd year – No. 29



Winnie Blackwood

From left, Montgomery County Attorney Meghan Manion and Chairman of the Economic Development and Planning Committee and District 9 Legislator Robert Purtell are shown during the committee's meeting on Tuesday.

County seeks funding for potential marina at Exit 29 site in Canajoharie

By WINNIE BLACKWOOD
For the C-S-E

FONDA — Montgomery County is looking for grant funds to be able to make its vision of creating a marina at the Exit 29 redevelopment site a reality.

On Tuesday, the Economic Development and Planning Committee moved a resolution to the Montgomery County

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Towns, villages to start ticketing for work done without proper permit

By **JOSHUA THOMAS**
C-S-E Editor

Recently, in four of the seven local Montgomery County towns and villages served by Code Enforcement Officer Cliff Dorrrough, a significant amount of property owners have begun work on building projects without first obtaining the proper permit.

After conferring with several mayors and supervisors, Dorrrough said tickets and fines will potentially soon be levied against offending property owners and contractors.

"I've been doing this for over 11 years, and this year alone has been the worst," said Dorrrough, noting various instances wherein homeowners dropped off permit applications for building projects, but then began — and sometimes completed — work prior to the permit's approval.

Several instances took place when Dorrrough was recently on vacation. He noted that two building permit applications were submitted in one municipality when he was away, with the mayor informing the property owners to wait until he returned for approval before beginning work.

"I went to both this morning," Dorrrough said Wednesday, "and found that the jobs had been done," pointing out that such instances put him in a precarious position, being that he's then expected to issue a building permit and a certificate of completion on the same day.

Dorrrough said that he regularly supplies building permits within a seven day time frame, though he's allowed ten, explaining that even while on vacation, he's only gone

long enough to ensure that he can return and issue permits within the allotted ten day window.

Dorrrough said it's possible that contractors who have engaged in work locally prior to providing a proof of insurance will also potentially be ticketed and fined. He believes that in some situations, contractors are pressuring property owners to begin work prior to receiving a permit, not wanting to wait the required week-or-so to start construction.

Contractors are required to show a proof of insurance before they enter a municipality to work — providing that paperwork in each individual municipality — with Dorrrough stating that contractors have the opportunity to provide proof of insurance for each municipality at the beginning of each year.

Dorrrough said that the mayors and supervisors he's spoken to in the four municipalities where building projects were started prior to obtaining a proper permit support his stance in "letting people know there is a correct procedure to follow."

Several, he said, are currently researching legal options regarding the potential to fine contractors for working without proof of insurance, which is required under New York State law.

St. Johnsville Mayor Charles Straney agreed with Dorrrough's stance, commenting that locally "it's an issue," noting of the lawful process of obtaining proper permits from the CEO, "It's not punitive — it's necessary."

Failure to secure the proper
**Please see
TICKETS, Page 9**



From left, Tolga Morawski, executive director of the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank, and St. Johnsville Mayor Charlie Straney are shown during the Montgomery County Legislature's June meeting.

Winnie Blackwood

Lawmakers reject bid for property in St. Johnsville

By **WINNIE BLACKWOOD**
For the C-S-E

FONDA — The Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank made a request to remove a property from the accepted bids of Montgomery County's 2019 real property tax foreclosure auction for their chance to step in and demolish the building.

The Montgomery County Legislature unanimously amended a resolution to remove 12 E. Main St. in the village of St. Johnsville during their June meeting after Tolga Morawski, executive director of the land bank, asked the legislators to remove it from the accepted bids and to potentially allow the organization to demolish the building. The conveyance of the property could be approved by the legislature at a later meeting date.

Chairman of the Legislature and District 4 Legislator Robert Headwell Jr. made a motion to amend the resolution with District 7 Legislator Michael Pepe seconding the motion.

According to the resolution document, Aleksandr S. Lensky, of Albany, was the successful bidder on the St. Johnsville property for \$5,000. The auction for the county owned properties was held on June 12.



Photo submitted

The Montgomery County Legislature rejected a bid for this building in St. Johnsville made at a tax foreclosure auction. The Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank wants to tear it down.

Morawski told the legislators he began working with Montgomery County Executive Matthew Ossenfort, Montgomery County Attorney Meghan
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DOWN MEMORY LANE



File photo

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Ready to board an Air Force T-33 jet trainer for an orientation flight, is Air Force ROTC Cadet James W. Hiller, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Hiller, 37 Shultze Street, Canajoharie. A senior at the Virginia Military Institute, Cadet Hiller is one of 200 Air Force ROTC cadets; who recently completed four weeks summer (1961) training at Otis Air Force Base, Massachusetts, as part of their Reserve Officer Training at college. Upon graduation from the Virginia Military Institute, he will be eligible for appointment as a second lieutenant in the Air Force and for entry into flight training to win the coveted wings of an Air Force Pilot.

Editorial from page 4

of verbal or physical attack is where any respectful adult should draw the line.

There's always a way to get your point across — whether or not we feel it's been heard by the targeted individual(s) — and it never involves physicality, or even raising your voice to an unacceptable, aggressive level, in my opinion.

I sincerely think some of the individuals involved in these ongoing local battles need to just take a breather to reconsider if publicly acting in such a shameful manner is going to move forward, or solve, anything at all.

And I understand that poor behavior, often completely devoid of respect, is basically the bulk of our daily news. Most everybody, I'm sure by now, has heard about the leader of our nation telling four elected officials — three born in this country and one a longstanding citizen who escaped deadly conditions elsewhere — to go back to where they came from.

The idea is utterly ridiculous that anybody who has a criticism of their country is not worthy to live in it or love it. And what do those words even mean when you're targeting somebody who was born here? Go back to where your family was originally from?

Well, since I'm around 78 percent Italian according to an Ancestry DNA test — the rest of me being composed of a bunch of other random stuff — I would have to ship most of myself off to Italy with the random finger, toe or appendage being sent off to various other places I've never even been to.

I'm surprised that there's even a conversation surrounding whether these words were warranted, because I find them to be simply indefensible from every potential viewpoint.

To tell somebody to go back from where they came from — even after suffering criticism that the recipient views as an attack on their character — is never defensible behavior.

As soon as we treat the individuals with which we're engaging with anything less than respect, we lose respect for ourselves. And at that point, you've just simply lost.

I can only imagine what would happen to me — or any employed local citizen — if I responded to a comment I didn't like at one of these public meetings by telling the individual who said it to "go back to where you came from." It would cause outrage.

I'd rightfully be fired, and hopefully shamed by the community, labeled as a racist and somebody to steer clear of.

That language can even be actionable in the eyes of the law, as it should be, and I don't think anybody should have a pass to treat anybody else with such disrespect. I get that it's human to become heated at times, but there are lines that simply shouldn't be crossed out of respect not only for other individuals, but for ourselves and the people who've raised us.

The golden rule — treat others how you want to be treated — is literally one of the first things I remember being taught, and I doubt you could find a local person who hasn't heard it.

Apparently, such lessons don't always sink in.

I sincerely believe, that if you're continuing to engage in intelligent, reality-based discourse — even when faced with criticism, when you feel you're under attack, or when the other person in the conversation refuses to also do so — then you're winning.

As soon as we treat the individuals with which we're engaging with anything less than respect, we lose respect for ourselves.

And at that point, you've just simply lost.

Property from page 3

Manion and Montgomery County Treasurer Shawn Bowerman seven months ago, after the organization was asked to figure out the tax properties they wish to acquire from the county at an earlier date. He added that he came before the legislators to discuss the East Main Street property and 42-50 Canal Street in the village of Fort Plain.

St. Johnsville Mayor Charlie Straney asked Ossensfort if the county could help support the village with the East Main Street building, formerly known as the Old Central Hotel. Ossensfort scheduled a walk-through at the beginning of June.

"It's a white elephant and they [the village] can't afford to do it on their own," Morawski said. "We went to do a walk-through ... the

mayor fell through the floor in the building when he went through the walk-through."

According to a letter written by John Mazzarella II, project manager of the land bank, structure deficiencies at the East Main Street property include bowed and split floor joists, collapsed ceilings, rotten floors and rotten and collapsing wall timbers. A 300 square foot portion of the second-floor ceiling is dangling from the rafters and could crash to the floor at any time, the letter reads. There is also fire damage in the building with charred floors.

"I work for you," Morawski said. "I work to help protect the county from liability. We sold the property at the auction for \$5,000. It should be torn down. It's a

\$120,000 demo. It's not something that should be put into somebody's hands. You go in there the roof is ready to collapse. This is something that we could all get sued for and I know there is a lot of concern about liability, but I think the liability of doing nothing is very serious also."

Straney told the legislators to try to work towards the "best possible outcome" and if the building is purchased he wants to see an informed buyer, who fully understands the current state of the East Main Street property.

"The building is in rough shape," Straney said. "The village recognizes that. This will be the third sale within the last 12 months. The last two backed out and didn't come through. My only concern is

the gentleman that is presently bidding has not seen the interior."

Prior to the legislator voting on the amendment and then passing the resolution, District 9 Legislator Robert Purtell asked Headwell to explain why he wanted the East Main Street property removed from the accepted bids.

"We have two individuals come before us to ask that it be removed, so that they can do something with it in the district," Headwell said. "I can see from the list that there was a gentleman from Albany that was looking to purchase this. Again, I have had the same difficulties in the past with properties in the village of Fultonville as the mayor ... I think we should be listening to the people from that area or

those areas when they have concerns about pieces of property."

Headwell added all he was asking was to remove the property from the list of accepted bids and talk during the July committee meetings about what they plan on doing with the building and if it will be conveyed to the land bank.

"I'm fine with that," Purtell said.

Morawski also explained why he was asking the legislature to convey 42-50 Canal Street for rehabilitation. A letter dated June 12 from the Village of Fort Plain Board of Trustees detailed that 42-50 Canal Street, or known as the Tingle Building, is known as one of the village's landmark

**Please see
PROPERTY, Page 6**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Canajoharie

July 24, 2 p.m. — The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie, 2 Erie Blvd., will host "Who Wore it Better? The Trials of Progress and the Wise 'Future of America.'" Join David Brooks, education director at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, as he looks at the similarities and differences between DeWitt Clinton and George Washington as they navigate the waters of internal improvements in early America. This presentation includes a gallery tour of the Portraits and Landscapes exhibition. Brooks will compare the portraits of both George Washington and DeWitt Clinton — noting their clothing, as well as their expressions — and how each of the two men "wore" success as well as failure in politics, personal life, and especially canal projects. Admission to the talk and tour are free.

July 27, 1-4 p.m. — The Arkell Museum at Canajoharie, 2 Erie Blvd., will host the Small Works Art Show and Auction. The event is an annual fundraiser for The Central Mohawk Valley Lions Club, consisting of small canvases painted and decorated by artists, colleagues, and community members.

Admission is free. For more information, contact Curator of Education and Public Engagement Mary Alexander at (518) 673-2314, ext. 113. The event is an annual fundraiser for The Central Mohawk Valley Lions Club, consisting of small canvases painted and decorated by artists, colleagues, and community members. Admission is free. For more information, contact Curator of Education and Public Engagement Mary Alexander at (518) 673-2314, ext. 113. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Aug. 1, 7 p.m. — The Caroga Lake Music Festival is an annual summer concert series, featuring some of the world's top young professional artists from the United States and abroad, will be held at the Arkell Museum, 2 Erie Blvd. This year's festival plans to present music for strings, piano, flute, clarinet, trumpet, and voice. Admission to the concert in the Great Hall is free, thanks to Kinderhook Bank for sponsoring the performance.

Aug. 6 — The Canajoharie Police Department will host National Night Out from 5:30-8 p.m. in downtown Canajoharie. National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make villages and towns safer, more caring places to live. The CYC will host a barbecue from 3-6 p.m., for which tickets are currently on sale. Call (518) 673-5117 for tickets. Local first responders will be on scene with vehicles and pieces of rescue equipment, and various community groups and organizations are scheduled to participate with a variety of fun and exciting activities.

Aug. 8, 7 p.m. — The Music on Mainstreet free concert series will begin with a performance by Jimmy Wolf, a singer, songwriter and guitarist who takes Delta-Chicago blues, 50s rock and R&B and mixes it with chainsaw guitar and overdriven voice to create a soulful musical experience.

Aug. 10, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Save the date and assemble a team for the second annual Canjo 4's Sand Slam 2019, a co-ed volleyball tournament. The event will be held at the sand courts at Richardson Brands

Co., 101 Erie Blvd. Sand and grass courts will be used. Cash prizes, door prizes, raffles.

Teams of four, \$25 per player. Team registration deadline is August 1. Recreational, novice and competitive, intermediate, and advanced registrations. For more information or to register, contact Matt Stanley at (315) 292-2306 or email: canjosandslam@gmail.com

Canajoharie — Arkell Center

Daily activities taking place at Arkell Center during the month of July 2019 for all area seniors will be as follows:

Monday through Friday, 11:45 a.m. — Hot meals are provided by OFA Meals of Montgomery Program (M.O.M.). Call (518) 673-2000 for reservations. Suggested donation is \$3 for those 60 years of age or older.

Tuesdays, 9-10 a.m. — A core strength and stability class will be held in the basement with Sharon. Suggested donation is \$5.

Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m. — A new Tai Chi class will be held with Earl O'Bryon, instructor. This workshop is sponsored by Montgomery County OFA.

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10-10:30 a.m. — A senior exercise program will take place in the basement and is open to all area seniors. Coffee will be served afterwards.

Wednesdays, 12:30-4 p.m. — The Senior Citizens Pinoche Card Party will be held with prizes given out. Refreshments will be served. There is a \$2 donation. To sub, call Terry at (518) 673-5635.

Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30 p.m. — Gentle yoga will take place in the basement with instructor, Patty Pietrowicz, and is open to all area seniors. Donation is \$5. Chair yoga will be held from 2 to 2:25 p.m., free in the Gallery.

Thursdays, 10:15-11 a.m. — The Diet Club will meet in the Gallery at Arkell Center. The goal is to be held accountable while maintaining weight. For more information call (518) 673-2112.

Fridays, 9-10 a.m. — Yoga with Sharon, instructor, will be held in the gallery for \$10 per person.

Canajoharie — Arkell Center Special Events

July 22, 6-8 p.m. — Knit and crochet with Carol Balfe.

July 26, 10 a.m. — Gary Van Slyke will entertain with "Train Songs."

Fort Plain

July 21, 3-5 p.m. — Explore how "mining your autobiography" can be helpful in creating fictional characters, storylines and scenes as the Fort Plain Free Library presents a free writing clinic with Siena College Teaching Assistant Professor James Belflower. Belflower, a published author and multimedia poet/critic, will facilitate the workshop titled "You Are a Character Too"

July 24, 6:30 p.m. — Local memoir writer Nancy Palker will be at the Fort Plain Free Library to talk about her recently published book, "Magic and Tragic Rosebud." Her account is about their work at the Lakota Sioux Rosebud Reservation hospital during the mid-1970s turbulence at Wounded Knee.

July 25, 6:30 p.m. — The Montgomery County

Sheriff's Office will host the second quarterly public meeting in the Fort Plain High School Auditorium, 1 West St. Use the Clyde St. entrance. The event will be hosted by Sheriff Jeffery T. Smith, Undersheriff Carl J. Rust, and members of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. Hear updates on Sheriff's Office business. The public is invited to ask questions, share concerns and provide feedback.

July 25, 7 p.m. — Free weekly concerts in Haslett Park will continue with a performance by Get Up Jack, playing a set of Irish folk music. Local groups and organizations will sell items, including refreshments, during each show.

July 26-27 — The Canajoharie-Fort Plain Summer Drama Club will present the Broadway musical, "Newsies" at the Fort Plain Jr./Sr. High School. Based loosely on the newsboys' strike of 1899, "Newsies" tells the story of Jack Kelly and his gang of struggling newspaper hawkers in New York City, selling copies of the NY World on the streets of Manhattan. When Joe Pulitzer suddenly raises the price that the newsies must pay, Jack galvanizes the other boys and girls to go on strike. "Newsies" will be performed on Friday night, July 26 at 7 p.m., with a matinee performance on Saturday, July 27 at 2 p.m. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for seniors/children/students.

Aug. 1, 6:30-8:30 p.m. — A free, casual gathering of philosophically minded individuals will take place at the Fort Plain Free Library, 19 Willett St. The Civil War will be the subject of this Philo Cafe discussion.

Fort Plain — Weekly Events

Mondays, 8 a.m.-noon — Painting get-togethers at the Fort Plain Senior Center. Call (518) 993-3432 for details.

Mondays, 12:15-1:45 p.m. — Afternoon bingo will be held at the Fort Plain Senior Center.

Tuesdays, 8 a.m.-noon — Pitch tournament at the Fort Plain Senior Center.

Every other Tuesday, 9 a.m.-noon — Quilting get-together at the Fort Plain Senior Center. Call (518) 993-3432 for details.

Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m. — The Lotus Center for Wellness and Self Care will be offering yoga sessions at 9 Center St. Call (518) 993-9904 for more information. The center is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. — The Lotus Center for Wellness and Self Care will be offering aerobic classes at 9 Center St. Call (518) 993-9904 for more information.

Tuesdays — AA group will once again be meeting at The Reformed Church in the Fellowship Hall at 7 p.m.

Every fourth Tuesday, 9:30-11 a.m. — Blood pressure check at the Fort Plain Senior Center. Call (518) 993-3432 for details.

Thursdays, 9 a.m.-noon — The Fort Plain Senior Center will hold bingo and lunch.

Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. — Veteran employment representative at VFW Earl Stock Memorial Post 3275.

3rd Wednesday of each month the Fort Plain Autism Support Group will meet at the Fort Plain

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Property from page 5

buildings in the downtown area.

Morawski said it is owned by James Burke, who has neglected the building and been cited by the village's code enforcement officer with a condemned notice. The village board is against re-conveying the property back to him.

"I have a structural engineer's report that this building could collapse in a heavy wind," Morawski said. "We have the money at the land bank, we are prepared tomorrow to spend \$80,000 to stabilize that building, \$500,000

commitment from New York State for Home and Community Renewal to renovate the building. It has sat there for 30 years without a penny of investment. It has gone through the tax foreclosure process eight times — eight times. He redeems it every time two days, three days before the auction, never does anything with it."

A letter from the adjacent property owner, Tanya Towne, who owns six apartments in the adjoining building with a shared party wall with 42-50 Canal Street details the state

of the building. Towne said in her letter that the backside of the building is cracked with loose bricks, windows are broken with glass randomly falling and weeds and grass have grown through the rear sidewalk and edge of the building.

Morawski said again with the Fort Plain building he is fearful of an individual getting hurt and the county being sued if it is re-conveyed to Burke. He suggested the county reject the re-conveyance to Burke.

Fort Plain Mayor Mark Nearbin said the village has written a letter to the land bank

to stand by the organization to have it conveyed to them for rehabilitation of the former Tinguet Building.

"We did that for a particular reason," Nearbin said. "The fact that the current owner has done nothing with this building to try to do any type of improvements, not to mention substantial improvements, any improvements has just not happened. We are just really looking for as a village to see what can be done to make the building safe to the public."

Nearbin said the village is at a standstill as to what they

can do to fix the building without help from the land bank as it is a "hazard to the public." He asked the legislature to help in anyway that they can to make sure the building is properly taken care of, as well as help with other at-risk properties.

Montgomery County Executive Matthew Ossenfort said ongoing discussions with the two villages to utilize and enforce their village codes have occurred. He added there are several options and discussions will continue between the land bank and the mayors.