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May 20th, 2026 - May 26th, 2026

NiagaraAction.com

Vol. 1, No. 8

FREE

Buffalo Parents Plead Guilty in Death of Infant Daughter, Judge Promises Only 1-3 Years

By: Staff Reports

A Buffalo couple admitted responsibility for the death of their infant daughter after prosecutors said the child died from severe malnutrition and dehydration following months of missed medical care and ignored warnings from healthcare providers.

Authorities announced that 26-year-old Luis Gonzalez Jr. and 23-year-old Kitrina Udrea, both of Buffalo, pleaded guilty Monday in Erie County Court before Judge James F. Bargnesi.

Both defendants entered guilty pleas to one count of second-degree manslaughter, a Class C felony.

According to prosecutors, Gonzalez and Udrea pleaded guilty to the highest sustainable charge and sole count contained in the indictment.

The case stems from the death of

(Cont. on pg. 12)

The \$10,000 Dining Bill: Why WNY's Pets Deserve a 24/7 Safety Net



By: Sumit Majumdar

A local family's life-saving ordeal highlights the rising crisis of "economic euthanasia" and the urgent need for accessible emergency care right here across Western New York.

Loki is a typical, happy-go-lucky dog. He's the kind of companion whose tail

wags with his entire body, whose mere presence turns a house into a home. But like many pets across Western New York (WNY), his boundless curiosity — and a highly indiscriminating appetite — recently led him into a sudden, life-threatening crisis.

It started innocently enough with about

(Cont. on pg. 7)

THE GARDEN GUIDE

WNY's heavy clay soils and unpredictable spring frosts demand tough plants that do the heavy lifting for you.



By: Sumit Majumdar

Oh boy, it hit 78 degrees today and we need to start gardening! Well, first let's hit the beer garden and talk about what we are planting this year in WNY. The great thaw is over, the lake effect is finally in the rearview, and it's time to get our hands in the dirt. Whether you are a seasoned green thumb mapping out your acreage or a total rookie just trying to keep a porch planter alive, gardening in 2026 is undergoing

(Cont. on pg. 16)

THE COUSIN and the FUNERAL

By: Jack R. Harrow

A NOTE FOR READERS:

This is the second chapter in a continuing account told through Frankie and Sal — two men who came of age in Niagara Falls during the reign of Stefano Magaddino. Their names are not their own. Their memories are. The story resumes in the winter of 1958–1959, after a failed assassination attempt against Magaddino raised questions that could no longer be answered quietly.

What follows is not an investigation, but an elegy — an eyewitness record of how a family, a structure, and a city learned that the old order was ending.

PINE AVENUE — EARLY MORNING

The snow came early that year and stayed long enough to rearrange the city.

Lake effect snow, heavy and wet, the kind that didn't drift so much as accumulate, narrowing Pine Avenue without changing its shape. Storefronts leaned closer together. Sound carried farther than it should have. Men learned new ways to stand still that looked like nothing.

The routines held. The bakery opened at the same hour. The tailor unlocked the door at eight. Women swept stoops with the same brooms they'd always used, though the cold made every movement deliberate, as if even the ordinary required thought now.

The Tropicana opened on time.

That didn't mean it mattered the way it used to. Some mornings Sal stood across the street with a coffee he didn't finish, watching the door. Some days nobody important came in at all. Other days men arrived in twos, stayed fifteen minutes, and left without finishing a drink.

Men were spreading out.

Sal noticed it in routes — who stopped using Pine as a corridor, who shifted to Main, who crossed streets early instead of late. Frankie noticed it in consequences — a dented fender that didn't get fixed, a store window boarded longer than usual, a delivery truck that stopped coming without explanation.

The federal sedan was still there, parked just off Main. Same make. Same posture. The agents rotated just often enough to avoid familiarity, but not enough to hide intent. Coffee cups. Newspapers folded open to the same pages, untouched. "They're settling in," Frankie said.

"They don't have to rush anymore," Sal replied. "Because of the grenade?"

Sal shook the head slightly. "Because it didn't go off."

That was the part nobody said out loud.

Three weeks had passed since someone had thrown a military issue grenade into Stefano Magaddino's kitchen on Dana Drive in Lewiston

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NIAGARA TOURISM

First Death-Defying Daredevil Tightrope Walk at Niagara Falls Between U.S. and Canada

Staff Reports

For hundreds of years, Niagara Falls has been home to daredevils and death-defying stunts. Countless people have attempted to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, on a jet-ski, a kayak, and even without the aid of any flotation device at all. Others have even tried to cross above Niagara Falls in the air.

The first person to attempt tightrope walking across Niagara Falls was Jean Francois Gravelet, known professionally as Charles Blondin, in 1859. Blondin was a French tightrope walker and acrobat who rose to fame after his tightrope walk across the Niagara Gorge on June 30th, 1859. The location of his walk is currently where the Rainbow Bridge is, which is a few thousand feet away from the brink of Niagara Falls. In total, Blondin walked 1,100 feet.

Blondin did not only walk this once, but several times afterward – and each time with a daring twist. Blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow, walking on stilts, in a sack, carrying a man on his back, sitting down halfway while he cooked and ate an omelette, and standing on a chair with only one of its legs balanced on the rope. It may be



completely crazy to imagine, but it's true!

Blondin will always be the first daredevil to complete a tightrope walk at Niagara Falls.



Princess Diana, Prince William and Prince Harry's Visit to Niagara Falls



Staff Reports

Millions of people from around the world travel to see the wonder of Niagara Falls. On October 26th, 1991, some of the most popular members of the British Royal Family came to experience it for themselves.

Princess Diana of Wales, and her sons Prince William and Harry, visited Niagara Falls and took a private ride on the Maid of the Mist. A lesser known fact about their boat ride is that they were able to enjoy time away from the paparazzi after Princess Diana requested they stay back and observe from shore.

Queen Elizabeth II Visited Niagara Falls Before Coronation

Staff Reports

Queen Elizabeth reigned as the British Monarch for 70 years between 1952 and 2022. A question people always ask is if she ever visited Niagara Falls as queen. Although the answer strictly speaking is no, that isn't the entire story.

Princess Elizabeth visited Niagara Falls just three months before ascending to the throne on November 7th, 1951. Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth visited the falls and then

attended a National Hockey League game in Toronto between the Maple Leafs and Chicago Blackhawks.

After her coronation, Queen Elizabeth came close to Niagara Falls but never reportedly came back to view the (unofficial) seventh wonder of the world:

- Queen Elizabeth visited Hamilton, Ontario on July 2nd, 1959
- Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake on June 28th, 1973



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LOCAL NEWS

NIAGARA FALLS

Niagara Falls Schools Facing \$8 Million Budget Hole as Diesel Prices and Rising Costs Create Financial Strain

Staff Reports

The Niagara Falls City School District is heading into the next academic year facing mounting financial pressure as district leaders confront an estimated \$8 million budget deficit driven in large part by escalating transportation expenses and other rapidly rising costs.

School officials say surging diesel prices have become one of the most immediate and costly challenges impacting district operations. According to fuel data from AAA, diesel prices in the Buffalo-Niagara region have climbed to more than \$5.90 per gallon, placing significant strain on districts that operate large transportation fleets.

The Niagara Falls City School District runs approximately 45 buses daily in addition to maintenance vehicles that rely on diesel fuel. Superintendent Mark Laurrie has said diesel costs alone have increased roughly \$2 per gallon, creating substantial new expenses that were not anticipated when budgets were initially developed.

District officials say those transportation costs are now colliding with rising utility bills, increasing health insurance expenses, and inflation-driven operational costs that continue affecting nearly every area of school spending.

To bridge the growing financial gap, the Board of Education approved tapping reserve funds to help absorb some of the added costs.

Laurrie described the move as necessary under current conditions but emphasized that reserve funds are intended for emergencies and cannot serve as a long-term budgeting strategy.

Officials indicated that increasing fuel costs arriving in the middle of a school year creates particular difficulties because districts have limited flexibility once budgets are already in place. Administrators say

unexpected spikes can force schools into difficult decisions involving operational spending and educational programming.

Despite the financial strain, district leadership said they are not pursuing a tax increase as part of the proposed 2026–27 school budget, which voters passed on Tuesday, May 19th.

The latest financial pressures come shortly after the district completed another challenging budget cycle that Superintendent Laurrie said was complicated by delayed action at the state level.

Following budget approval, Laurrie released a detailed statement criticizing New York State for failing to finalize its own budget on time while school districts were required to proceed with budget planning under uncertain conditions.

According to district officials, several unexpected expenses significantly impacted finances during the past year.

This included a \$450,000 settlement connected to the Child Victims Act, a \$511,000 generator failure, and a state-mandated increase of approximately \$500,000 in charter school aid obligations.

Additional costs reportedly came from frozen federal funding, the addition of two special education classrooms during the school year, utility pricing increases, and transportation needs for more than 100 additional students.

Laurrie also pointed to state-level decisions involving the consumer price index as another factor creating financial complications.

Despite those challenges, district leaders say they successfully remained under budget while maintaining educational services.

According to district officials, the district has now turned to reserve funds for the first time since 2014. Administrators argued that decision was not caused by poor planning but rather a combination of unexpected circumstances beyond the



district's control.

Laurrie also highlighted the district's record regarding local taxes, noting that during his tenure as superintendent school taxes have not increased. He argued that raising taxes or relying on tax increases to build reserve balances would create additional burdens for local residents.

Instead, Laurrie says the district is relying on attrition through retirements rather than layoffs to help control costs while maintaining services.

School leaders also said budgeting decisions prioritized student safety, alternative education programming, mental health services, updated graduation requirements, and maintaining smaller class sizes.

Although some financial strategies used this year may not remain viable indefinitely, officials noted the district still retains approximately \$40 million in reserve funds.

District leaders stressed that no employ-

ees are expected to receive layoff notices related to budget constraints and that academic and social-emotional services for students will remain intact.

Laurrie expressed confidence in incoming Superintendent Stan Wojton and said the district remains stable despite enrollment declines affecting not only Niagara Falls but also broader population trends across Niagara County and New York State.

Officials maintain the district is not facing a crisis but acknowledge that ongoing enrollment declines and continued financial pressures will require close attention moving forward.

Laurrie also pointed to enhanced security measures, facility improvements, improving academic performance, and initiatives such as Say Yes Niagara Falls as indicators that the school district is on the upswing despite current financial challenges.

Seneca Niagara Employee Honored for Exceptional Service as Tourism Season Ramps Up in Niagara Falls

Staff Reports

As Western New York prepares for another busy summer tourism season, one longtime employee at Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino is receiving recognition for years of dedication and customer service that officials say has helped shape visitors' experiences from the moment they arrive.

Jason Steinberg, one of the resort's original employees and a longtime member of the Bell Person Valet team, was recently recognized by Destination Niagara USA as a recipient of the Destination Niagara Tourism Employee Spotlight Award.

The recognition came as part of activities surrounding National Travel and Tourism Week, during which Destination Niagara USA surprised seven tourism workers throughout Niagara County who were selected for demonstrating exceptional service and dedication within the local hospitality industry.

Award recipients each received \$500 Visa gift cards in recognition of their efforts and contributions toward creating memorable experiences for visitors traveling to the region.

For Steinberg, the honor reflects years of involvement at one of Niagara Falls' most recognizable destinations.

Described as a "day one" employee at Seneca Niagara, Steinberg spent years working in a position that often serves as one of a visitor's first points of contact upon arriving at the resort.

Resort officials say those initial interactions can play a significant role in shaping a guest's



overall experience.

According to Hicham Jaddoud, Steinberg has consistently distinguished himself through his work ethic and approach to customer service.

"Jason consistently goes above and beyond for our guests and his fellow team members," said Hicham Jaddoud, Senior Vice President of Resort Operations at Seneca Resorts & Casinos.

"As part of our Bell Person Valet team, he is often one of the first team members that guests will interact with when they arrive at Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino. Jason consistently sets the tone for the world-class resort experience we strive to provide our guests, exemplifies AAA Four Diamond service standards, and embodies the core values and mission of Seneca Resorts & Casinos."

For Steinberg, the recognition serves as acknowledgment of years spent helping create first impressions for guests walking through the doors of one of the region's largest hospitality destinations.

Relief Coming for Drivers as \$8.7 Million Niagara Falls Road Project Begins

Staff Reports

Motorists traveling through Niagara Falls may soon notice smoother rides and fewer punishing potholes as a multi-million-dollar infrastructure project officially moves forward across some of the city's heavily traveled roadways.

An \$8.7 million construction initiative is now underway targeting sections of the LaSalle Expressway and portions of Interstate 190 with state officials aiming to address long-standing roadway wear.

According to the New York State Department of Transportation, construction work has already started and will focus primarily on repaving highway surfaces to create safer and more reliable travel routes.

While both roadways are expected to remain open during construction, drivers should prepare for long-term lane closures and changing traffic conditions throughout the duration of the project.

The work comes after years of complaints from residents and motorists frustrated by deteriorating road surfaces, rough pavement, and vehicle damage concerns across portions of the city.

Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino

said roadway conditions have consistently remained one of the top issues raised by local residents.

"We have heard loud and clear from our residents and taxpayers that repairing area roadways is a high priority and our crews are working hard to repair roads across the city, so we are extremely pleased that the New York State Department of Transportation is undertaking this important work to further enhance the quality of life in our city," said Restaino in a release.

The repaving project will not be the only major transportation work affecting the area.

Officials say a separate project involving bridge deck replacements along the LaSalle Expressway is also scheduled to move forward. That work may create additional traffic shifts and modified travel patterns as construction progresses.

Together, the projects represent a substantial investment in transportation infrastructure within Niagara Falls and are expected to continue well into next year.

State officials currently anticipate both construction efforts reaching completion by August 2026.

NIAGARA FALLS CONT.

THE COUSIN and the FUNERAL Cont. from Cover

and failed to kill him. Long enough for the newspapers to stop pretending it was a mystery. Long enough for rumor to stop behaving like rumor and start behaving like fact.

The old man hadn’t flinched.
That detail mattered more than anything else.
After Apalachin, nothing moved quickly anymore.
The meeting in November 1957 — held at a house in Apalachin, New York — had been meant to demonstrate order. Instead, it revealed scale. Too many cars. Too many faces. Too much confidence in invisibility. When the New York State Police showed up, it didn’t just embarrass the men who ran things. It froze them.
Commission meetings stopped.
Inter family travel slowed.
Large gatherings disappeared.
What replaced them were quiet, bilateral contacts — one family to another, one emissary at a time — all officially deniable.

Niagara Falls felt it early, because Niagara Falls had always been useful precisely because it didn’t look important.

Men were arriving again now. Not loudly. One at a time. New York accents. Chicago vowels. Coats cut for cities that didn’t get this kind of cold. Shoes too good for slush.

They weren’t staying near Pine.
They were staying at the Hotel Niagara.
HOTEL NIAGARA — MIDDAY
The Hotel Niagara announced itself the way it always had.

Light. Crystal. Brass. Chandeliers heavy enough to suggest permanence. A lobby designed for pauses. Men crossed the marble slowly, coats draped just so, as if being seen were still a language that worked.
You stayed there to send a message: I am not hiding.

Sal watched from across Main Street. Watched men check coats, shake hands, linger near the desk longer than necessary. Watched who spoke to whom, and who didn’t.
“These aren’t tourists,” Frankie said.
“No,” Sal agreed. “These are witnesses.”

Across the street stood the United Office Building. Plain brick. Respectable. Offices listed neatly by profession. Lawyers. Accountants. Consultants. Everything proper on paper.

Men crossed the street after dinner. Not loudly. Not in groups.
Some men preferred visibility.
Some preferred compartments.

The men who had grown up here joked quietly about it. Not cruelly. Just acknowledging how Niagara Falls worked. Propriety on one side of the street. Discretion on the other. Everyone understood the arrangement.

Inside the hotel bar, laughter came too easily. Drinks were ordered too quickly. Men spoke louder than necessary, as if volume could still function as armor.

After Apalachin, visibility had become a gamble. Being seen could mean legitimacy — or it could mean exposure.

**NIAGARA STREET — AFTERNOON
MAGADDINO MEMORIAL CHAPEL**
The funeral home didn’t announce itself.

Two stories. Squat. Brick. Half the first floor buried into the ground. Garage doors along the side, wide enough to drive under. Cars disappeared beneath it.
You couldn’t see in the windows.

That wasn’t a mistake.
It sat at the corner of Niagara Street and Portage Road, facing traffic instead of welcoming it — a building meant to be passed, not admired.

Sal and Frankie stood across Portage, collars up against the wind.

Black cars idled along the curb. Engines running. Buffalo plates. New York plates. One from Illinois. Another from Ontario. A lot of the immigrants from the old country went there before coming across to the United States, and a lot of the hitters came from the old country. Canadian plates were not a good sign.

Men arrived in ones and twos. No greetings on the sidewalk. No lingering. Faces neutral. Movements practiced.

“They’re not here to mourn,” Frankie said.
“They’re here to measure,” Sal replied.

Inside, nobody raised their voice. Nobody talked about the grenade. That question had already burned itself out.

This was about what it meant that someone had thrown it — and lived — and that nobody seemed eager to correct that imbalance.

Apalachin had changed federal posture. After 1957, the FBI stopped pretending this was a collection of local problems. Surveillance increased. Agents rotated to avoid familiarity. Pressure was applied at the edges — drivers, bookkeepers, anyone peripheral enough to squeeze, central enough to know routes.

Niagara Falls mattered because it was small enough to disappear and important enough to count.

A car slid out from beneath the building, merging into traffic without signaling.
“That’s fear,” Frankie said.
“No,” Sal replied. “That’s calculation.”

MAIN STREET — LATE AFTERNOON
They walked.

Main Street wore money openly. Diamond stores with thick glass. Furriers heavy with inventory. Cadillac and Buick dealerships lit like stages, chrome gleaming under fluorescent lights. Cigar shops exhaled smoke into the cold, back rooms busy with cards and

quiet arithmetic.

Rathskellers sat half buried, doors opening onto warmth and beer and men who’d learned to keep their voices low.

Jazz leaked from an after hours club behind an unmarked door. A piano bent standards into something almost mournful. A local attorney held court at the keys most nights, fingers moving too fast, like someone trying to exhaust a memory.

Nobody stopped it.
Nobody asked why.
World War II still lived in this city.
Men drank as if the war might still be inside them.
Some of them had learned skills overseas that didn’t disappear just because peace had been declared.
Niagara Falls had always been useful because it sat on a border.

Canada wasn’t a metaphor.
THE RIVER — DUSK

The river moved fast, gray and unforgiving. Ice churned in the current, breaking itself smaller as it went. The border cut through the middle — invisible, absolute.

“They came from the same town,” Frankie said.
“Castellammare del Golfo,” Sal replied.
Stefano Magaddino and Joseph Bonanno had come from the same Sicilian town, crossed the same ocean, built their power together when nobody was watching. When the Commission was formalized, Magaddino became something like a custodian — old rules, old discipline, control of corridors that mattered.
“And Apalachin broke it,” Frankie said.
Sal nodded once.

Apalachin had made someone responsible.
“The man who organized it,” Frankie said.
“The man whose territory it was in,” Sal said.
“But everyone was there.”
“Yes,” Sal said. “Which is why nobody forgave it.”
Joseph Bonanno was practically born into the Mafia.
His father was descended from an influential Mafia family.

His mother Catherine was a Bonventre. His maternal grandmother was a Magaddino.
Bonanno did not retreat after that. Montreal. Arizona. Independent expansion that ignored Commission discipline.

“And the grenade?” Frankie asked.
“That was punctuation,” Sal said.
THE STAGEDOOR — NIGHT

They didn’t go to the Tropicana.
They went to the Stagedoor.
Pasquale “Patsy” Paonessa wiped the bar constantly. Sweat soaked through the shirt. Lips moved when nobody was watching.
“You boys want something?” Mike asked.
Sal nodded. Frankie didn’t.
“People are asking questions,” Mike said.
“Which ones?” Sal asked.
Mike crossed himself.

“Friend of theirs,” Mike said. “Or friend of ours.”
That question used to organize the world.
Now it only divided it.

NIAGARA STREET — FRIDAY MORNING
Everyone knew Anthony “Tony” Ciaravino.

Not a boss. Not a legend. A trucking man. A routes man. The kind of man who knew which nights customs waved you through and which nights they didn’t. The kind of man who showed up at wakes and weddings and never spoke out of turn.

Tony didn’t come home on Tuesday.
On Wednesday, people said delayed.
On Thursday, they said away.
On Friday morning, the side doors of the funeral home on Niagara Street were open.

There was no body.
Sal heard about it before he saw it.
“There’s no casket,” someone said at the Stagedoor.
“Just the room.”

By noon, cars lined Niagara Street. Black ones. Good ones. Men in coats appropriate for mourning, even though there was nothing to mourn yet.

Inside, a single photograph sat on a small table near the wall. Tony younger than Sal remembered. Hair still dark. Eyes still confident.

No flowers.
No prayers yet.
Just men standing and counting.
Who showed up.
Who didn’t.
Who stayed long enough to be seen.
Who left early enough not to be counted.
“This isn’t Catholic,” Frankie said quietly.
“No,” Sal said. “This is organizational.”

A funeral without a body wasn’t a hope.
It was a conclusion.
Sal felt it then — not fear, exactly, but the sensation of a floor being removed without warning.
“That’s the answer,” Frankie said.

Sal didn’t reply.
He was watching the door.

END
That night, the Hotel Niagara burned bright, chandeliers blazing, laughter too loud in the lobby, as if visibility could still protect anyone.

Across the street, the United Office Building sat dark.

The river kept moving.
This time, Pine Avenue didn’t hold its breath.
It knew what a funeral without a body meant.
And it knew who had just spoken.

First-ever Urban Planet Coming to Niagara Falls Fashion Outlet Mall After Tax Break Request Approved

Staff Reports

Shoppers in Western New York are about to get a new addition to the local retail landscape as the region’s first Urban Planet location prepares to officially open inside the Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA.

The new store, located at 1900 Military Road in Niagara Falls, is scheduled to open Friday, May 22nd, bringing a fashion brand known for trendy apparel and accessories geared toward younger shoppers into the local market for the first time.

The nearly 20,000-square-foot retail space will be situated near Entrance 6 along Fashion Outlets Boulevard, making it one of the larger additions to the shopping center.

Mall officials are planning to mark the opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled for 10am at the store’s interior entrance.

The arrival of Urban Planet also coincides with a major holiday shopping push at the outlet mall.

Fashion Outlets officials announced a Memorial Day weekend sidewalk sale running from Friday, May 22nd through Monday, May 25th, with participating retailers expected to offer special promotions throughout the property. Some stores may display merchandise and promotional offerings directly outside or near their entrances as part of the event.

The shopping center is also planning an additional promotion for visitors during the holiday weekend.

On Saturday, May 23rd, from noon until 2pm shoppers who present receipts from participating sidewalk sale retailers at the mall’s center court area will be eligible to select a summer promotional item from Fashion Outlets. Officials said the giveaway is limited to one promotional item per qualifying store receipt while supplies remain available.

Fashion Outlets marketing manager Susie Swiatkowski said mall officials are excited to bring a new retailer into the region as the summer shopping season begins.

“We are thrilled to welcome Urban Planet to our mall just in time for Memorial Day,” said Swiatkowski. “We are kicking off the summer season with a weekend of great fashion and great deals throughout the mall.”

With Memorial Day weekend expected to generate increased activity and summer tourism beginning to ramp up in Niagara Falls, mall officials are hoping the timing creates strong momentum for the new store’s debut.

Excitement for the mall is sorely needed given its current financial circumstances. Earlier this month, Fashion Outlets II LLC and its parent company, Macerich Niagara LLC, sought more than \$17 million in property tax exemptions and assistance as the owners attempt to stabilize finances surrounding the nearly 44-year-old shopping center from the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency board.

According to the applications, mall operators say they are facing increasingly severe econom-

ic pressure caused by declining occupancy, changing consumer behavior, rising operational expenses and the continued growth of online shopping.

“Collectively, these factors have created a challenging environment for shopping centers throughout the Northeast,” the applications read.

The filings paint a troubling picture for one of Niagara County’s largest retail and employment hubs.

Mall occupancy has reportedly been steadily declining since 2019 with more than one-third of the property’s current leases scheduled to expire this year alone—creating the potential for even more vacant storefronts inside the already thinning shopping complex.

The property’s assessed value has also dropped dramatically over the last decade.

According to the applications, the assessed value of the Fashion Outlets has fallen by approximately \$82 million since 2010.

At the same time, the mall continues carrying significant debt obligations.

Buffalo Business First previously reported the property was operating at just 71% occupancy during the first nine months of 2025 while carrying a \$76.4 million loan balance approaching an October 1st maturity deadline.

The Fashion Outlets remains one of the region’s largest shopping destinations, currently employing approximately 778 workers with an estimated combined payroll of \$35.01 million.

Its website still lists more than 100 stores, kiosks and food vendors.

The request for assistance was passed by the board, giving the Fashion Outlets some much-needed relief.

The Niagara County Industrial Development Agency granted preliminary approval for approximately \$17 million in property tax incentives.

During the meeting, attorney Kevin Clyne said the request was focused on immediate stability, describing the situation as “short-term survival,” while emphasizing parent company Macerich remains committed to the Niagara Falls region and hopes the incentives will help improve occupancy levels.

The IDA reviewed two separate assistance requests — one tied to the original mall property through Macerich Niagara LLC and another covering the 2014 expansion through Fashion Outlets II LLC.

Officials said the mall already operates under two existing PILOT agreements, set to expire in 2027 and 2030. Rather than continue separate arrangements, negotiations led to a proposal combining them into one consolidated PILOT agreement covering both sections of the property.

According to Niagara Town Attorney Mike Risman, discussions surrounding the agreement began last October after Macerich filed an assessment challenge. Under the proposed structure, host community agreements would remain unchanged, while PILOT payments would be reduced to roughly half of their previous levels.

Rob Ray Cashes in at Seneca Niagara Event, Wins Big for Buffalo Sabres Alumni Scholarship Fund

Staff Reports

Rob Ray, longtime Buffalo Sabres fan favorite and broadcaster, turned a strong showing at a celebrity gaming event into a sizable contribution for a scholarship program benefiting students throughout Western New York and Southern Ontario.

The action unfolded Friday, May 15th at Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino during the casino’s \$50,000 Celebrity Blackjack Tournament, an event that brought together athletes, media personalities, influencers, and invited guests for an evening of competition and charity.

The tournament format paired invited participants with celebrity competitors, with celebrities playing not only for bragging rights but also for charitable organizations of their choice.

When the final chips were counted, Ray finished as the highest-ranking celebrity participant, earning third place overall and

securing a \$7,500 prize benefiting the Buffalo Sabres Alumni Scholarship Fund.

The tournament’s top overall prize — worth \$25,000 — went to an invited player from Irving.

The scholarship program benefiting from Ray’s finish has built a long track record in the region providing financial support for eligible high school seniors across Western New York and Southern Ontario who plan to pursue full-time undergraduate education at accredited colleges and universities.

Since its creation, the scholarship initiative has awarded more than 175 scholarships totaling more than \$1 million.

This year’s celebrity field included a collection of sports figures, broadcasters and local personalities.

Among those participating were Bills line-backer Greg Rousseau, former Bills receiver Stevie Johnson, media personalities Nicholas Picholas and Mike Schopp, along with social media personalities Natalie Scott, Scott Rich-ter and Bianca Falsetti.

AROUND NIAGARA COUNTY

North Tonawanda Launches New Sidewalk Program to Help Homeowners Cut Repair Costs

Staff Reports

Homeowners in North Tonawanda may soon get some financial relief when it comes to replacing cracked and deteriorating sidewalks as city officials roll out a new initiative designed to improve neighborhood safety while lowering out-of-pocket costs for residents.

City leaders announced the launch of a new "Sidewalk 50/50" cost-sharing program that will help eligible homeowners replace aging sidewalks through a partnership between property owners and the city.

Under the initiative, the City of North Tonawanda will cover half of approved sidewalk replacement costs, while homeowners participating in the program will be responsible for the remaining portion.

Officials say the effort is intended not only to help residents manage the expense of necessary repairs but also to improve walkability, accessibility, and overall neighborhood appearance throughout the city.

Funding for the program is limited, however, and city officials say participation will be determined on a first-come, first-served basis while available funds last.

Submitting an application does not automatically guarantee acceptance.

To keep pricing controlled and ensure consistency across projects, the city sought public bids and selected the lowest responsible contractor to complete approved work.

All sidewalk replacement projects accepted through the initiative will be performed exclusively by the contractor chosen by the city.

Officials said this approach is designed to provide uniform construction standards, quality workmanship, and cost efficiency across all approved projects.

Current estimates indicate participating homeowners can expect to pay approximately \$175 to \$200 for each sidewalk slab or block replaced, although costs could vary depending on project scope and material expenses.

The city will pay the remaining balance of approved replacement costs.

City officials noted one important exception involving sidewalks damaged by municipal trees.

The Sidewalk 50/50 program will not apply to sidewalk deterioration caused by roots from city-owned trees. Residents experiencing that type of damage are instead encouraged to contact the Department of Public Works for review and possible repair options.

To qualify for the program, applicants must meet several requirements. Eligibility standards include:

- Property owners must not have outstanding property taxes
- Applicants cannot have unpaid water bills
- Only property owners may submit applications
- Replacement work will use standard concrete finishes only

Once a project receives approval, the city-selected contractor will coordinate directly with homeowners regarding scheduling, billing and construction timelines.

Mayor Austin Tylec said the initiative is intended to help residents while also investing in long-term community improvements.

"This program is about helping residents invest in our neighborhoods in a practical and meaningful way," said Tylec. "By financially assisting residents address sidewalk repairs, we are improving pedestrian safety, supporting accessibility for residents of all ages and abilities, and continuing to take pride in the condition of our city."

Officials say safer sidewalks and improved pedestrian access remain important quality-of-life issues, particularly for seniors, children, and residents with mobility challenges.

Residents interested in participating can find applications and additional details through the city website at www.north-tonawanda.gov/sidewalk-replacement-program.

Candlelight Cabinetry in Lockport to Reopen as New Ownership Group Announces \$11 Million Investment



Staff Reports

A manufacturing facility that abruptly shut down earlier this year in Lockport, Niagara County is preparing to reopen after a newly formed ownership group acquired the operating assets of the former Candlelight Cabinetry business.

Governor Kathy Hochul announced that Candlelight Curated Inc., a partnership formed by local investors Aaron Santarosa, Peter Demakos, and Jon Ebel, has officially taken control of the facility and plans to relaunch operations with a major modernization effort.

The reopening is expected to immediately restore 100 manufacturing jobs that were lost when the plant suddenly ceased operations in January.

The company is partnering with Quebec-based manufacturer Cuisine Idéale on an \$11 million investment strategy aimed at rebuilding and upgrading the longtime Lockport manufacturing site located at 24 Michigan Street.

The facility entered foreclosure after experiencing financial turmoil under prior ownership, resulting in a complete halt to manufacturing activity and layoffs affecting the entire workforce.

Before operations collapsed, the plant employed approximately 170 workers and had become entangled in disputes involving lenders and ongoing operational challenges that ultimately left vendor orders unfulfilled.

According to state officials, the acquisition was completed through a Uniform Commercial Code foreclosure sale, commonly referred to as a UCC foreclosure process, allowing the new ownership group to quickly secure the operating assets and begin efforts to restart production.

The investment plan includes significant structural renovations throughout the facility as well as the installation of updated precision manufacturing equipment intended to expand production capabilities and improve operational efficiency.

The ownership group says the long-term goal is to combine traditional custom cabinetry craftsmanship with more advanced automated manufacturing technologies in an effort to compete for larger market opportunities throughout the East Coast.

"This is outstanding news for Lockport and the entire Western New York workforce," said Hochul. "The re-opening of a shuttered business is a major victory, especially when it puts 100 talented people back to work while actively upgrading regional manufacturing infrastructure. This targeted investment helps secure the future of custom cabinet making in Lockport and advances the overall economic momentum of the region."

Company officials emphasized that restoring jobs remains one of the project's top priorities as preparations begin to restart production.

"We are incredibly grateful for New York State, the Niagara County IDA and Senator Ortt's swift partnership, which allowed us to step in, secure this historic facility and protect Lockport's long-standing legacy of high-end cabinet manufacturing," said Candlelight Curated Inc. CEO Peter Demakos. "Our primary goal is to get our skilled craftspeople back to the production floor as safely and quickly as possible. With a \$11 million commitment toward structural renovations and machinery upgrades, we are positioning this plant to operate with greater efficiency, higher quality and broader custom design capabilities than ever before."

State economic development agencies are also assisting with the project.

Empire State Development has approved up to \$2 million in performance-based Excelsior Jobs Program tax credits connected directly to the company's job creation commitments. Officials say those incentives are expected to help offset deferred maintenance costs and major equipment upgrades needed to restart production.

State Senator Robert Ortt praised the acquisition and credited the investor group for moving quickly to preserve jobs in the region.

"I am grateful that we have a group of investors who recognize the importance of this business in our community and who have committed first and foremost to doing right by the workers," said Ortt. "This group saved a well-established company and dozens of jobs, and moved quickly to do so—keeping reliable, good-paying jobs here in Niagara County."

The reopening marks a significant turnaround for a facility that only months ago appeared at risk of remaining permanently shuttered.

North Tonawanda Students Take Over City Hall During Student Government Day



Staff Reports

Students from North Tonawanda High School stepped into leadership roles across the City of North Tonawanda during the annual Student Government Day program, gaining a firsthand look at how local government operates.

The program, held through a partnership between the city and school district, allowed 22 students elected by their classmates to shadow city officials and department heads for a day. Participants toured City Hall, the Department of Public Works, police headquarters and other city departments before concluding with a mock Common Council meeting.

Youth Programming Supervisor Michelle Bernas said the program helps students understand how civic engagement and constructive communication can make a difference in their communities. Mayor Austin Tylec described the event as a long-standing tradition that provides students

with valuable exposure to public service.

Students filled a wide range of roles, including mayor, police chief, fire chief, city attorney, alderperson positions, and numerous department leadership posts.

Following tours and meetings throughout the day, students later reconvened at City Hall where they conducted a mock Common Council meeting, handling roll call, resolutions, voting procedures and public comment responsibilities.

Students participating included Graeme Ashby, Haydee Moore, Eden Trometer, Eric Grinnell, Sophia Mussel, Addy Lebaron, Jayce Anderson, Richie Andres, Kurt Davidson, Alanis Perez, Shawn Bailey, Mason Manna, Josy Bird, Giana Mansour, Stone Kozlowski, Jayden Fulcher, Logan McQuiggan, Kaitlyn Binner, Addison Zawadzki, Lamya Boutakhoust, Logan Stowell and Kylie Bird.

City officials said the event aims to help students better understand local government while encouraging future involvement in their communities.

BUFFALO

Buffalo Airport Receiving \$8.7 Million Federal Upgrade as Major Improvements Planned for Travelers

Staff Reports

Passengers flying through Buffalo Niagara International Airport could soon see noticeable improvements as federal officials announced millions of dollars in new funding aimed at modernizing airport operations and upgrading key passenger infrastructure.

On Monday, May 18th, Tim Kennedy announced that Buffalo Niagara International Airport was awarded \$8.7 million through the Federal Aviation Administration's Fiscal Year 2026 Airport Terminal Program.

Airport officials say the funding will support several projects designed to improve efficiency and enhance the travel experience for passengers moving through one of Western New York's busiest transportation hubs.

est transportation hubs.

The largest portion of the project involves replacing up to eight passenger boarding bridges.

Those structures serve as the enclosed walkways connecting airport terminals directly to aircraft and are among the most heavily used pieces of infrastructure throughout an airport.

Officials say the boarding bridge upgrades are expected to improve reliability and passenger movement while reducing operational issues associated with aging equipment.

Congressman Kennedy said continued investment has become increasingly important as travel activity through Buffalo continues growing.

"As more people travel through Buffalo Niagara International Airport, it is critical that we continue investing in modern,

reliable infrastructure that improves the passenger experience and keeps our region connected," said Kennedy. "This \$8.7 million federal investment will help deliver safer, more efficient operations for travelers while supporting jobs and economic growth here in Western New York. I'm proud to fight for federal resources that strengthen our infrastructure and position our region for continued success."

In addition to replacing boarding bridges, the funding package also includes new ground power units and preconditioned air units.

Those systems provide aircraft with electrical power and climate control capabilities while parked at airport gates, reducing dependence on onboard systems and improving operational efficiency.

Airport officials say the upgrades represent another step toward bringing

Buffalo's facilities closer to what travelers often experience at larger airports.

Kelly Khatib, public information officer for the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, described the boarding bridge improvements as an important component of the overall customer experience.

"It basically connects the plane to the airport when you're trying to walk to the little runway to get onto your plane, so we're excited we're able to just add more to the customer experience," said Khatib.

She also emphasized the broader goal of continuing to improve airport operations and modernize facilities.

"It's just another step in making the Buffalo airport just like those top bigger destination airports that you go to," Khatib said.

Buffalo Police Facing Recruitment Crunch as New Officer Numbers Drop and Staffing Pressures Grow

Staff Reports

The challenge of recruiting police officers has become a growing issue across the country, but the problem is becoming increasingly visible in Buffalo where officials are confronting shrinking academy classes, rising retirements, an increasingly competitive hiring landscape, and a disdain for law enforcement.

As discussions surrounding the next labor contract between the city and the Buffalo Police Benevolent Association begin taking shape, one issue appears to be drawing attention from nearly everyone involved: finding enough people willing to become police officers.

Recent hiring numbers illustrate the challenge.

The newest Buffalo Police Academy class, which entered training in January 2026, included just five recruits, which is the department's smallest incoming class in more than a decade. The previous year brought only 12 recruits into the academy.

The drop represents a significant shift from earlier periods when classes routinely brought in larger groups of cadets and highlights the difficulty departments now face attracting new applicants.

The problem extends far beyond Buffalo.

A 2024 national survey conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police found that roughly 70% of responding agencies reported recruiting had become more difficult than it was five years earlier. Those same departments reported operating, on average, at only 91% of authorized staffing levels.

Locally, Buffalo officials are now exploring new strategies aimed at reversing the trend.

City leaders and department ad-

ministrators are preparing another police entrance examination this summer with hopes of building a larger academy class later this year. Officials are also considering online testing options that could allow potential recruits to complete portions of the process remotely and potentially expand the applicant pool beyond traditional geographic limits.

Another approach under consideration involves pursuing lateral transfers – something not previously permissible – where officers already certified and employed elsewhere could transition directly into the department.

Buffalo Police are also increasing reliance on social media outreach, traditional advertising efforts, and direct recruitment through existing officers and community contacts.

The challenges facing Buffalo are also being compounded by broader changes affecting policing nationally.

Law enforcement experts have increasingly pointed to changing (i.e.: extremely negative) public perceptions surrounding police work over the last decade. High-profile incidents involving police misconduct, public protests, intense scrutiny of law enforcement practices, and evolving attitudes toward policing have altered how many younger people view careers in law enforcement and just cops generally.

Departments are also finding themselves adapting to changing workplace expectations.

Younger generations entering the workforce increasingly prioritize work-life balance, scheduling flexibility, and time away from work – factors that don't exactly jive with law enforcement responsibilities. This is especially true where staffing shortages often require mandatory overtime and unpredictable schedules.

In Buffalo, staffing limitations



and an increase in retirements have reportedly placed additional strain on officers remaining within the department.

Many officers have been required to work extended hours and cover nights, weekends, and additional shifts in order to maintain minimum staffing requirements.

Those pressures have reportedly become especially noticeable in areas such as B-District, where entertainment venues, nightlife activity, and large events create increased staffing demands.

Retirement numbers have also added pressure.

Last year alone, Buffalo saw 47 police retirements, which is more than double what is considered average.

Officials have attributed portions of the increase to uncertainty involving healthcare benefits and broader concerns affecting long-term employment decisions.

Complicating matters further, departments throughout Western New York are increasingly competing against one another for a shrinking number of applicants.

Suburban agencies often present attractive alternatives because of pay scales, schedules and perceived quality-of-life differences.

Officials have acknowledged that some Buffalo officers have left for nearby agencies in recent years.

Buffalo Police Commissioner Erika Shields identified recruitment and workforce development as significant priorities moving forward.

Officials also continue emphasizing efforts to maintain and expand diversity throughout the department, something that is currently sorely lacking.

In 2015, city leaders launched initiatives intended to create a police force more reflective of the communities officers serve.

While some programs introduced during that period were short-lived, demographic shifts within the department have continued.

Since 2015, Buffalo has graduated 538 cadets from its academy system. Slightly more than half of those recruits were white.

For now, however, the larger reality remains difficult to ignore.

Buffalo is not simply competing against neighboring departments or struggling with a local issue, but navigating a national trend affecting police agencies across the country.

BUFFALO CONT.

The \$10,000 Dining Bill: Why WNY's Pets Deserve a 24/7 Safety Net Cont. from Cover

By: Sumit Majumdar
President & CEO of Buffalo
Biodiesel Inc. | Limited Partner &
Director of Energy and Agriculture
at Verite Capital Partners

of "table surfing" and ended in catastrophe with a swallowed ball.

For my family, this moment of domestic mischief transformed instantly into a visceral, terrifying ordeal. The journey began at our trusted local vet in North Tonawanda. They did a spectacular job stabilizing Loki, but they simply did not have the surgical capacity or the after-hours staffing for an "on-the-spot" emergency of this magnitude.

Because after-hours specialized veterinary hubs are few and far between in the region, we were forced to do what every local pet owner dreads: make the frantic, midnight drive to BluePearl Pet Hospital in Cheektowaga.

I want to be unequivocally clear: the care, treatment, and support we received at BluePearl were outstanding. Every frantic question we had was patiently answered, transparent quotes were provided upfront, and the entire team proved to be exceptionally competent, knowledgeable, and compassionate.

Having been a dog owner for nearly 50 years, I've unfortunately had my share of not-so-great experiences at other clinics over the decades. The level of excellence and empathy at BluePearl was striking, providing a massive sense of relief in a dark moment.

But that excellence comes at a necessary cost. That night culminated in a staggering \$9,000 medical emergency: nearly \$3,000 upfront for advanced diagnostics and chemical stabilization, followed by \$6,000 for critical abdominal surgery and a multi-day ICU stay.

We were incredibly fortunate to have the financial means to absorb the cost of Loki's "extravagant dinner." However, sitting in that fluorescent-lit emergency room at 2:00 a.m. revealed a heartbreaking, silent epidemic: the difference between a pet

living or dying is often determined solely by an owner's credit limit.

"You aren't just surrounded by pets in physical pain; you are surrounded by neighbors in deep financial agony, doing desperate mental math to figure out what a life is worth."

THE HEARTBREAK OF ECONOMIC EUTHANASIA

When you sit in a veterinary ER in the middle of the night, you see the heavy toll of modern veterinary costs firsthand.

When the money simply isn't there, families are forced into an impossible corner. The resulting action is a term that deeply haunts the modern veterinary profession: Economic Euthanasia.

This tragic outcome occurs when a completely treatable condition results in a beloved pet being put down simply because the owner cannot afford the necessary medical intervention.

The Stark Reality by the Numbers:

- The Savings Gap: Most American households report they can comfortably handle a sudden emergency of roughly \$1,000 to \$1,500.

- The Real Costs: Life-saving procedures—like foreign body removal, complex fracture repairs, or treating a deadly pyometra—routinely hit the \$5,000 to \$10,000 mark.

- The Fatal Choice: Recent national data indicates that over 52% of U.S. pet owners have had to decline or postpone veterinary treatment due to prohibitive costs.

The profound tragedy of economic euthanasia is the survival rate.

Emergencies like Loki's often boast a 90% or higher clinical success rate if treated promptly. Losing a savable animal takes a massive psychological toll on the grieving families who leave the clinic with an empty leash, and on the dedicated veterinary staff forced to administer a lethal dose.

THE REGIONAL DISADVANTAGE ACROSS WNY

The reality of modern, specialized veterinary medicine is that it mirrors human healthcare in sophistication, procedural protocol, and underlying



Loki

cost.

The surgical suites, continuous oxygen lines, and 24-hour pathology capabilities require massive overhead.

But unlike human healthcare, there is no government-subsidized universal safety net for our pets.

For residents spanning across Buffalo, Niagara, and the surrounding towns, the crisis is twofold: financial and geographic.

When a pet collapses late at night or over the weekend, families are often forced to map out frantic, multi-town journeys just to find an open emergency clinic door that can handle major trauma.

Organizations like the SPCA Serving Erie County perform incredible work through the Lipsey Veterinary Clinic, but their wellness-focused hours remain limited.

As a broader community, we need to ask ourselves how we can better support our regional safety nets to handle after-hours medical catastrophes for owned pets across WNY. A CALL TO ACTION FOR WESTERN NEW YORK

Loki is fully recovered now.

Unfortunately, he's back to his old routine of table surfing. The difference this time is that he's trained me to keep the tables completely free of surfable ingestibles that might land my doggie back in the vet's office.

But every time he looks up at me, I am reminded of just how close we came to losing him.

His story must be more than a cautionary tale for WNY pet owners; it needs to be a ringing wake-up call for our local philanthropists, civic leaders, and corporate citizens.

We must advocate for, fund, and build a local solution.

Whether that means expanding community grants, establishing a heavily subsidized regional 24/7 emergency fund, or building out continuous-care capacity at our local shelters, the time to act is now.

No family should ever be forced to choose between their dog's life and their ability to pay the rent, and no pet should be lost simply because accessible emergency help is out of reach in a moment of crisis.

New Stores Revealed as Station 12 Development Takes Shape in Amherst

Staff Reports

Construction is continuing to transform a major stretch of Sheridan Drive in Amherst as developers behind the highly anticipated Station 12 project released new renderings and unveiled another wave of businesses set to move into the upscale retail destination.

The latest images provide a fresh look at what visitors can expect when the open-air shopping and dining development opens later this year, while newly announced tenants continue expanding a lineup that developers hope will make the project one of the Buffalo region's premier retail hubs.

Officials announced that several additional national retailers and restaurants are now joining the project.

Among the newest names headed to Station 12 are J.Crew, PopUp Bagels, State &

Liberty Clothing and Madewell.

The additions further build on a growing list of businesses that have already committed to opening locations within the development.

According to project officials, the mix of retailers and restaurants reflects increasing interest from brands seeking a presence in Western New York and confidence in Station 12's long-term potential.

Brian Sciera, senior vice president of leasing for WS Development, said the response from retailers has continued to strengthen as the project progresses.

"This latest mix of brands highlights the strong demand we're seeing from retailers and restaurants excited to be part of a dynamic and growing retail destination in Amherst. Together, they bring added depth and energy to the vibrant experience we're

creating for the Buffalo region," said Sciera.

Station 12 has steadily assembled a lineup featuring fashion retailers, fitness concepts, dining options and lifestyle brands intended to create a destination experience rather than a traditional shopping plaza.

Previously announced businesses include:

- Williams Sonoma
- Pottery Barn
- Industrious
- Black & Blue Steak and Crab
- alo
- Warby Parker
- Anthropologie
- FP Movement
- solidcore
- EVEREVE
- Just Salad
- Free People
- Oola Bowls



The development marks one of the larger retail projects currently underway in the Buffalo area.

Additional announcements are expected as work continues toward the plaza's opening later this year.

AROUND ERIE COUNTY

Tonawanda Man Killed After Being Struck by Amtrak Train Near Sheridan Drive

Staff Reports

A late-night incident involving an Amtrak passenger train claimed the life of a Town of Tonawanda man on Wednesday, May 13th, prompting an active investigation by local authorities.

According to the Town of Tonawanda Police Department, officers were dispatched at approximately 10:38pm after receiving reports of a pedestrian being struck by a train near Sheridan Drive.

The incident occurred north of Sheridan Drive in the area of Military Road where investigators later determined that a man had been struck by an Amtrak train traveling through the area.

Police identified the victim as 63-year-old Michael Lukacz of Tonawanda. Authorities said he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigators said preliminary findings

suggest Lukacz appeared “to have been attempting to walk across the train tracks when he was struck,” law enforcement said.

The train involved in the incident was reportedly carrying passengers en route to Niagara Falls at the time of the collision.

Authorities said no injuries were reported among train passengers or crew members aboard the Amtrak service.

Fatal incidents involving rail lines often require extensive investigative work as officials reconstruct timelines, review witness information, and determine the sequence of events leading up to the collision.

The case is currently being handled by the department’s Accident Investigation Unit, which continues to examine the circumstances surrounding the incident. Officials have indicated that no additional information is being released at this stage of the investigation.

Anyone who may have witnessed the incident or has information relevant to



investigators is being asked to contact the Town of Tonawanda Police Department at (716) 879-6614 or call the department’s

confidential tip line at (716) 879-6606. An investigation remains ongoing.

Grand Island Splash Pad Project Suddenly Put on Hold as Funding Questions Spark Board Frustration

Staff Reports

A proposed splash pad project planned for Veterans Park on Grand Island has hit an unexpected pause after Town Board members raised concerns over project costs, funding gaps, and questions surrounding how the purchase process moves forward.

During a May 11th meeting, Grand Island Town Board members voted to temporarily halt the town’s contract tied to construction of the splash pad while officials gather additional information and determine whether the project remains financially viable in its current form.

The decision followed extensive discussion among board members, many of whom expressed concern that the project advanced further than expected before receiving broader Town Board review.

With Marston absent, the four remaining council members voted to suspend the contract for one week, delaying further action until the board’s next scheduled meeting.

Council member Dan Kilmer introduced the motion to pause the process.

“I think we should put, at the minimum, a pause on the order until this board makes a decision on the way forward,” said Kilmer.

Kilmer questioned whether board members had been adequately informed during earlier stages of planning and argued that more oversight should have occurred.

“If we were in the loop every step of the way ... we would have said ‘no’ six months ago or we’d have said, ‘proceed forward,’ ” he said.

Although Kilmer supported pausing the agreement, he emphasized that doing so did not necessarily mean the end of the project.

“This does not mean a splash pad’s dead. [It] means it goes on the shelf and we start looking for grants and ways to finish financing it.”

Council member Jose Garcia supported the motion and raised additional questions about project scope and whether costs could be reduced through a smaller design.

“Put it on pause. Find out where they’re at. Find out if it’s scalable.”

Garcia suggested that a downsized version of the project could potentially help bridge funding concerns while preserving the concept.

The contract itself is with Vortex Aquatic Structures International Inc..

Funding for the splash pad traces back to a larger \$1.1 million grant originally awarded to the Miracle League through Erie County using federal American Rescue Plan Act funds intended to address economic impacts from the COVID era.

Earlier phases of that grant were used to improve the adaptive baseball field and playground at Veterans Park. Those improvements have already been completed.

However, town officials now say approximately \$477,000 remains available from the grant for the splash pad itself.

The town also secured an additional \$220,000 through a bond resolution approved in August 2024 as a financial safeguard in case grant funds proved insufficient.

According to figures presented by Council member Rhonda Diehl, the current estimated price

for the splash pad stands at roughly \$708,000. Once utility connections including water, wastewater systems and electrical work are added, the total project price increases to approximately \$782,594.

Using the available funding sources leaves an estimated shortfall of approximately \$85,594.

“That gives us a usable, nice-looking splash pad,” said Diehl.

Diehl also pointed to available money within the Parks Trust Fund that could potentially cover the remaining funding gap.

She indicated the account currently contains more than \$170,000 and suggested using a portion of those funds to bridge the deficit.

But additional cost concerns surfaced during the discussion.

Marston had previously outlined several possible project expenses not included in Diehl’s calculations, including:

- Additional perimeter concrete estimated at \$170,000
- ADA-compliant sidewalks estimated at \$170,000
- Fencing estimated at \$40,000

Combined, those additions could substantially increase the total project price.

Diehl acknowledged another variable influencing the discussion, which were reports of a potential donor who may help fund portions of the project.

“My concern is that this has been two months and we knew nothing about it,” she said. “And then to find out about it, it’s a little concerning to me that maybe we know about it now because the donor might not be solid.”

Town official Digati indicated that any efforts involving outside fundraising or donors would likely be handled through the Miracle League.

Board members also questioned future operational expenses that may continue long after construction ends.

Those concerns included insurance costs, maintenance requirements, staffing needs and whether additional employees would eventually be necessary.

“I’d like to know those answers before ready to vote on spending anything,” said Garcia.

Garcia also questioned how the project had evolved before reaching the board.

“I mean this was before my time [on the Board], but did these people ever make a presentation or explain what the splash pad was?”

Digati explained that the vendor involved operates through a state contract arrangement.

“That vendor is on state contract. So, that’s why this never went out to bid and never was all able to be done.”

Kilmer pushed back, arguing that state contract status should not eliminate board oversight.

“You’d have to take it back to the board.”

Garcia later voiced broader frustrations about communication and transparency within town operations.

“The fact that we can make this work does not cure my ire,” he said. “This one’s caught because it’s a massive issue, right? How many things are happening that we don’t know about. That’s the lack of confidence that I have now in how things operate here.”

For now, the future of the splash pad remains uncertain as town officials consider finances and unanswered questions.

Poloncarz Blocks Youth Hunting Expansion Again, Overriding Legislature Vote as Critics Eye Veto Fight

Staff Reports

A bill that had already cleared the Erie County Legislature with majority support is once again facing a roadblock after Mark Poloncarz used his veto power to halt legislation that would have allowed 12- and 13-year-olds to legally hunt deer with firearms in Erie County.

The move marks another chapter in a debate that has repeatedly resurfaced in county government and has increasingly become a source of frustration for supporters who argue Erie County remains an outlier compared to the rest of Upstate New York.

Last month, county lawmakers approved the proposal by a 7-3 vote. One legislator was absent.

The three votes opposing the legislation came from legislators Lawrence Dupre, Taisha St. Jean Tard, and Jeanne Vinal.

Despite legislative approval, Poloncarz ultimately stepped in and blocked the measure.

In explaining his decision, Poloncarz pointed to hunting-related child fatalities and concerns involving firearm safety.

“I come from a family that hunts. My father hunted, my brother hunts, and other members of my family hunt. This is not about being against hunting,” said Poloncarz. “It is about whether I believe it is appropriate for 12- and 13-year-olds to hunt big game, even with a mentor. Because of the risk, and because of the child fatality reports I have read, I do not believe it is.”

Poloncarz acknowledged that New York’s program has not produced incidents involving 12- and 13-year-old hunters since the state legislature approved the measure in 2024.

However, he cited fatal hunting accidents involving younger children in other states as justification for his decision.

The veto has reignited criticism from supporters who argue the county executive is once again standing in opposition to legislation that had already earned support from county lawmakers and mirrors policies already

permitted elsewhere across New York.

This is not the first time Poloncarz has blocked similar legislation.

He vetoed nearly identical legislation in 2021, preventing the county from participating in youth hunting expansion efforts then as well.

At the time, lawmakers lacked enough support to override that veto.

This time may be different.

Following passage of the latest bill, representatives within the legislature’s minority caucus indicated they believe sufficient votes now exist to override Poloncarz’s decision.

The legislation stems from a New York pilot initiative first established in February 2024 where minors ages 12 and 13 can hunt deer while supervised and use equipment including crossbows, rifles, shotguns, and muzzleloading firearms, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Supporters of the policy throughout the state argue the program introduces younger participants to hunting through structured mentorship and safety requirements while preserving traditions many families have followed for generations.

The Erie County debate carries additional significance because county officials acknowledge Erie now stands alone among upstate counties.

According to state information, Erie County is currently the only county in Upstate New York that does not allow children in this age group to obtain hunting licenses under the state pilot framework.

That distinction has fueled criticism from some hunting advocates who argue local families are being denied opportunities available almost everywhere else in the region.

Now attention shifts back to county lawmakers.

If enough legislators follow through on previous statements and vote to override the veto, Poloncarz’s latest effort to block the measure could prove temporary.

But if support slips, Erie County could remain on its own island yet again as the lone Upstate county refusing to allow youths to participate in the program.

ROCHESTER

Can Music Keep Inmates From Returning to Jail? New Program Aims to Break Addiction and Repeat Offenses

John Watson

Inside a jail setting where many inmates eventually return after release, one New York program is experimenting with an unconventional approach that officials hope could help break cycles of addiction, incarceration, and repeat offenses.

At the Monroe County Jail, a pilot initiative is using music as a tool for rehabilitation, blending addiction treatment with creative expression in an effort to help inmates develop skills and confidence that may extend beyond incarceration.

The effort comes against a troubling backdrop. According to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, more than half of individuals incarcerated in New York return to jail within three years of release, underscoring the challenge officials continue to face in reducing recidivism.

Rather than relying solely on traditional treatment methods, the Monroe County program brings together inmates partici-

pating in a jail drug rehabilitation initiative and musicians from the Eastman School of Music.

Recently, those musicians performed a concert unlike any many of them had experienced before.

The audience consisted of inmates inside the jail, but this was not a standard performance. Several incarcerated participants helped create the music themselves.

Working alongside Eastman students, inmates used a computer composition platform known as Hyperscore to develop original mini-symphonies that were later performed live.

Among the participants was inmate Frank Cremaldi, who is awaiting transfer to state prison and is expected to serve a sentence of two to four years.

Cremaldi has spent years struggling with addiction and has experienced repeated incarceration. He described addiction as something that made it difficult to begin projects or see them through to completion.

Through the music initiative, he said

the experience provided an opportunity to create something meaningful from start to finish and gave him a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

Students and faculty involved in the project also viewed the experience as extending far beyond music itself.

Eastman musician Aiden Hughes emphasized a belief that incarceration should focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment alone and viewed the program as a creative way to support that mission.

Program organizers echoed that perspective.

Eastman associate professor Elinor Freer described the music itself as secondary to the broader goals of the project, explaining that the process helps participants build teamwork, collaboration, decision-making abilities, and other life skills that can prove valuable outside jail walls.

Jail officials involved in the rehabilitation effort say the program is only one component of broader addiction treatment work happening inside the facility.

Drug counselors reportedly work di-

rectly with inmates to identify underlying causes of addiction while family members are often involved as part of the rehabilitation process.

According to Monroe County Sheriff's Office Director of Drug Rehabilitation Joel Yager, measuring success can be difficult because recovery and rehabilitation are deeply individual processes. However, he indicated the program has already shown encouraging signs and noted that many participants have avoided returning to jail.

For inmates involved, officials say activities that create structure and purpose can become particularly important.

Programs focused on engagement and personal development are often viewed as an alternative to idle time, which is something that correctional staff and rehabilitation specialists have long argued can contribute to negative behaviors.

Ultimately, the goal remains to reduce the number of people who cycle repeatedly through the criminal justice system.

Whether music becomes a lasting part of that strategy remains to be seen.

Rochester Police Turn to Active-Duty Military as Officer Shortage Reaches Critical Levels

John Watson

Facing a major staffing shortage and continuing recruitment challenges, the Rochester Police Department is taking an unconventional approach to rebuild its ranks—looking to active-duty military personnel for help filling vacant positions.

Department officials say Rochester is currently operating with a shortage of approximately 120 officers, a gap that law enforcement leaders describe as a serious operational challenge as the city works to maintain staffing levels and public safety services.

The shortage is part of a broader trend affecting police departments across New York and throughout the country, but Rochester's struggles have been particularly visible in recent years.

Publicly available staffing data and prior city discussions have shown the department has spent years battling retirements, recruitment issues, officer departures, and broader shifts affecting law enforcement agencies nationwide. Rochester's police force has also operated under intense public scrutiny following several high-profile incidents that officials and observers have said created additional recruitment hurdles.

Like many agencies nationwide, police officials have increasingly pointed to changing perceptions of policing, competitive labor markets, and retirement waves as major challenges affecting hiring.

Now, Rochester officials are trying a different strategy.

The department has joined the military's SkillBridge initiative, which is a federal transition program designed to help active-duty service members gain civilian work experience during the final 180 days of military service before separation.

The initiative allows participants to explore career opportunities and establish connections before entering civilian life.

Police officials believe many military skills naturally align with careers in law enforcement such as discipline, leadership experience, and working in high-pressure environments.

Department representatives indicated the recruitment effort extends

across all military branches including the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

Officials believe Rochester may currently be the only police department in New York participating in the SkillBridge program.

The department expects additional military participants to enter the program during 2026.

Several service members currently participating described similarities between military service and policing, viewing law enforcement as an opportunity to continue serving communities after leaving active duty.

Participants said the transition offers a chance to maintain a sense of mission and purpose while applying skills developed during military careers.

One Air Force member involved in the initiative indicated that policing and security work naturally fit with his background and career interests.

Marine participants also described law enforcement as an extension of public service, explaining that serving communities carried similarities to serving the country.

Officials say the recruitment strategy may already be producing measurable results.

According to department representatives, the most recent police examination cycle reportedly experienced a roughly 40% increase in applicants compared with the same period one year earlier.

Department leaders believe targeted outreach toward military members may be contributing to that rise.

Officials also note that veterans already make up a significant portion of the current police workforce.

Whether the program can substantially reverse Rochester's staffing deficit remains uncertain.

Replacing approximately 120 officers is a significant undertaking, particularly at a time when departments across New York continue competing for a smaller pool of applicants.

But as Rochester faces ongoing pressure to stabilize staffing levels, city leaders appear willing to expand recruitment efforts beyond traditional pathways in hopes of rebuilding the department's ranks.

Dramatic Helicopter Rescue Near Rochester's High Falls Captured on Video After Man Stranded in Dangerous Waters

John Watson

A dramatic rescue operation unfolded high above downtown Rochester over the weekend after emergency crews raced to save a man stranded on an island near High Falls as fast-moving river conditions created an increasingly dangerous situation.

The rescue, which was captured on video, eventually required assistance from the United States Coast Guard after local crews encountered conditions severe enough to halt initial rescue attempts.

According to the Rochester Fire Department, emergency responders were dispatched shortly before 5:40pm on Sunday, May 17th, after receiving reports of an individual trapped near the river.

When firefighters arrived, crews located a man stranded on an island near the Pont de Rennes Pedestrian Bridge, a location overlooking portions of the Genesee River and High Falls area.

Initially, firefighters began preparing for a rope rescue operation in an effort to reach the stranded man.

However, officials said rapidly moving water and increasingly hazardous river conditions quickly created significant challenges for crews attempting to reach the island safely.

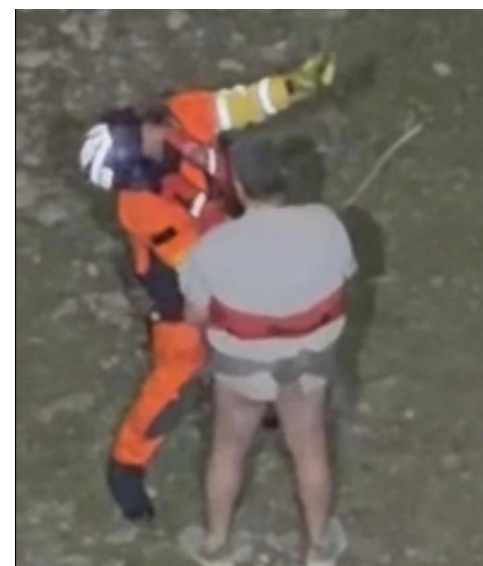
The fire department later stated that the "extremely strong current and hazardous river conditions" prevented firefighters from deploying rescue boats or watercraft into the area.

The dangerous conditions also impacted first responders directly.

According to officials, two firefighters were thrown into the river during the rescue effort.

One firefighter required assistance returning safely to shore. Both ultimately made it back without injury.

As river conditions worsened and tradi-



tional rescue options became increasingly risky, officials requested additional support from the Coast Guard.

Within minutes of arriving, a Coast Guard helicopter crew launched what became a dramatic aerial rescue operation.

Video of the rescue showed a crew member rappelling from the helicopter onto the island where the stranded man had been waiting.

The rescuer then secured the man using safety equipment before both individuals were hoisted together back toward the hovering helicopter.

The entire operation unfolded in less than five minutes.

The footage quickly drew attention because of both the speed of the rescue and the difficult conditions surrounding the incident.

No injuries were reported, nor have any details been released about how the individual became stranded on the island or what circumstances led him into the hazardous area.





STATE NEWS

NYSEG Rates Set to Rise Again as Utility Hike Sparks Outrage From Public Officials and Customers

Staff Reports

Utility customers across New York are once again preparing for higher monthly bills as another increase tied to New York State Electric & Gas moves forward. The decision, set to go into effect within two weeks, is already drawing criticism from elected officials and frustrated residents who say energy costs have become increasingly difficult to afford.

The New York State Public Service Commission took the unusual step of delaying a final ruling on NYSEG's broader request for major delivery rate increases for electricity and natural gas service. While regulators postponed a permanent decision, they simultaneously approved temporary increases for six months while additional review continues.

Beginning June 1st, electric delivery rates are scheduled to increase by 3.7% while natural gas delivery fees will rise by approximately 0.5%.

The actual impact on customers will vary depending on whether the account is residential, commercial, or industrial, but the decision adds to growing concern among customers who have already experienced years of escalating utility costs.

According to state regulators, the temporary increases are intended to provide additional funding for infrastructure projects and upgrades designed to improve reliability and system safety.

The Public Service Commission noted that NYSEG and sister utility Rochester Gas and Electric submitted among the largest utility rate requests seen in recent years.

Regulators indicated that the original proposals could eventually increase costs by roughly \$33 per month for electric service and another \$33 for natural gas for an average homeowner. The increases will potentially add hundreds of dollars annually to household expenses.

Officials also acknowledged overwhelming public reaction during the review process.

The commission reportedly received tens of thousands of public comments from residents and customers responding to the proposed increases, creating an unusually large volume of material still under review.

However, that has not stopped the increases from coming.

The utility issue has also become a growing political flashpoint.

Josh Riley criticized the commission's handling of the issue and accused NYSEG of prioritizing corporate interests over struggling customers.

Riley has argued that NYSEG has transferred hundreds of millions of dollars to parent company Iberdrola in Spain while continuing to seek larger increases from customers across Upstate New York.

"The Public Service Commission, instead of having a backbone and a little bit of common sense and rejecting the rate hike, decided they're going to kick the can down the road for 6 months, and let NYSEG charge our community another \$50 million during that period of time," said Riley. "If NYSEG needs another \$50 million, it can go ask their corporate overlords in Spain to send a refund back to Upstate New York."

Riley is not alone in raising concerns over rapidly rising utility costs.

State lawmakers, local officials and consumer advocates throughout New York have increasingly voiced concerns about affordability as energy costs continue climbing while inflation affects nearly every aspect of household spending.

Many public officials have argued that residents are now confronting simultaneous increases involving groceries, housing expenses, insurance premiums, fuel prices and utility bills.

Critics have also pointed to billing controversies and customer complaints that have surrounded NYSEG in recent years, including issues involving delayed bills, inaccurate charges, customer service concerns and confusion surrounding account balances.

Meanwhile, NYSEG defended its position in a statement addressing the temporary increases.

Company officials said they understand concerns surrounding affordability but maintain that infrastructure investments remain necessary to ensure reliable long-term service.

NYSEG stated that it recognizes the need to keep customer bills affordable while continuing investments designed to maintain a safe, reliable and resilient utility system.

The company further argued that ongoing modernization efforts and sustained infrastructure spending may help prevent larger costs from emerging in the future.

For many customers, however, that explanation provides little comfort as another increase arrives in the coming weeks.

Republicans Push Gas Tax Suspension as New Yorkers Feel Pain at the Pump

Staff Reports

As fuel prices continue climbing and drivers across New York face increasingly expensive trips to the gas station, several Republican candidates and party officials are now calling for temporary tax relief measures that they argue could provide immediate help for consumers.

The proposal comes as many residents say rising prices at the pump are creating additional financial pressure at a time when families are already dealing with higher costs for groceries, utilities, housing, and everyday expenses.

Republican candidates and party leaders gathered this week to advocate for a temporary suspension of both state and federal gas taxes, arguing that the move could provide short-term relief while broader economic issues continue playing out.

Monroe County Republican Chair Peter Elder said officials are seeking action from both state and federal leaders.

"We are calling on our state and federal elected officials to remove, at least temporarily, the gas taxes on gas," said Elder.

Virginia McIntyre, a Republican candidate for New York's 25th Congressional District, urged cooperation between leaders from both parties.

"I am calling on both President Donald Trump and Governor Kathy Hochul to set their differences aside and work together immediately to suspend both federal and New York State gas taxes," said McIntyre.

Specifically, supporters are pushing for passage of the American Families Gas Tax Relief Act at the federal level, legislation that would suspend the federal gasoline tax for 120 days.

At the state level, advocates are seeking a 90-day suspension of New York's gas tax.

Supporters argue that temporary relief could lower prices at stations and reduce pressure on drivers facing growing transportation expenses.

But gas taxes also serve another purpose.

Revenue generated from those taxes helps fund transportation infrastructure, road maintenance, and public projects throughout New York and nation-wide.

Republican candidate Tracy DiFlorio said immediate action is needed.

"We are demanding action by suspending the gas tax for 90 days," said DiFlorio.

Republican Assembly candidate Dave

Ferris directed criticism toward state leadership.

"Once and for all, Governor Hochul, step up to the pump and give the people of your state a break," said Ferris.

The proposal, however, is facing pushback.

Kathy Hochul has previously expressed skepticism about temporary tax suspensions and questioned whether consumers would actually see meaningful long-term savings.

"We've done it before and what happens is, the companies increase their cost by the same amount, so the consumer only sees it continue to go up," said Hochul. "That's the reality of what happened last time we did this. But also, this is a problem created by the federal government."

Some Republican supporters of the tax proposal argue safeguards could be added to reduce the possibility of fuel providers offsetting any savings.

Chris Brown suggested price protections should accompany any tax reduction effort.

"We've got to be responsible about it though because we don't want businesses to take advantage of that situation," said Brown. "So, we want to put a cap on prices that is reasonable."

Democrats, meanwhile, pushed back against Republican criticism and instead pointed toward broader national policy issues.

Stephen DeVay argued the causes of fuel price increases lie elsewhere.

"The reality is they could do their actual jobs and they could be fighting to say, let's stop this illegal war of President Trump, which is a direct causation of the gas prices going up," said Monroe County Democratic Committee Chair Stephen DeVay.

Drivers themselves remain caught in the middle.

New Yorkers are frustrated by prices at local stations, and that frustration grows every ten cents that a gallon of gas increases.

During this entire debate, New Yorkers are simply saying: "why are we taxing gas at all?"

For now, the proposal remains a non-starter for democrats at every level of government.

But with fuel costs remaining a major concern for drivers and election campaigns beginning to intensify, debate surrounding gas taxes could become an increasingly visible issue in New York if prices do not start to come down.

Appeals Court Delivers Split Decision on New York Gun Restrictions, Strikes Down Part of State's 'Sensitive Locations' Law

Staff Reports

A federal appeals court has handed New York a mixed ruling in one of the ongoing legal battles surrounding the state's sweeping post-Bruen gun laws, striking down one firearm restriction while allowing another major provision to remain in place.

The decision from the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit centers on New York's controversial rules governing where licensed gun owners may legally carry firearms under the state's Concealed Carry Improvement Act, commonly referred to as the CCIA.

Judges ruled that New York cannot prohibit licensed gun owners from carrying firearms on private property that is open to the public – including places such as stores, restaurants, and similar businesses – unless individual property owners decide otherwise. The court found the state had not shown suf-

ficient historical precedent supporting such a broad restriction under the constitutional framework established by the U.S. Supreme Court.

However, the court reached a different conclusion involving public parks.

Judges upheld New York's prohibition on carrying firearms in public parks, determining there was enough historical support to allow those locations to qualify under the state's "sensitive location" framework.

The latest ruling represents another chapter in a legal fight that began after the landmark 2022 Supreme Court decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*.

That ruling dramatically altered firearm law nationwide by striking down New York's longstanding requirement that individuals show "proper cause" to obtain concealed carry permits. The decision significantly expanded gun rights and required courts to evaluate firearm restrictions based on histori-

cal tradition rather than broader public policy arguments.

In response to Bruen, liberal New York lawmakers – in control of the Assembly, Senate and Governor's office – quickly passed the Concealed Carry Improvement Act. Governor Hochul signed the legislation into law on July 1st, 2022.

The legislation dramatically reshaped New York's firearm laws by creating extensive lists of locations designated as "sensitive places" where guns would remain prohibited even for licensed carriers.

Those locations included schools, government buildings, healthcare facilities, public transportation systems, entertainment venues, parks, houses of worship, and private property open to the public unless business owners explicitly allowed firearms.

The law immediately generated multiple lawsuits from gun rights organizations and firearms advocates who argued the state was attempting to sidestep the Supreme Court rul-

ing by making large portions of everyday life effectively off-limits for legal gun carriers.

Since then, the Concealed Carry Improvement Act has faced a series of legal challenges producing a series of rulings in appellate courts.

Previous decisions have already struck portions of the law involving social media disclosure requirements and aspects of New York's private-property restrictions.

Although some of the major provisions of the law have been struck down, courts have upheld numerous other provisions including restrictions involving transit systems and certain designated sensitive areas.

Gun rights advocates argue the state has repeatedly attempted to impose broad restrictions inconsistent with the Supreme Court's direction in Bruen.

But with portions of gun laws still facing active legal challenges, the fight over second amendment rights in New York is far from over.

NATIONAL NEWS

Trump Tightens Grip on GOP Primaries with Major Wins, but Questions Loom Ahead of Midterm Battles

Staff Reports

President Donald Trump continues demonstrating significant influence over Republican primary voters as his political operation racks up additional victories and removes several opponents from within the party, reinforcing his position as a dominant force in GOP politics heading into the next election cycle.

Recent primary results have highlighted Trump's continued ability to shape Republican contests, particularly when targeting officeholders or candidates who publicly opposed him or broke from his policy agenda.

Throughout the month, Trump-backed efforts helped defeat multiple Republican state senators in Indiana who had opposed his push for mid-decade redistricting plans.

Another closely watched development occurred in Louisiana where Senator Bill Cassidy failed to advance after facing backlash tied in part to his vote to convict Trump during the former president's 2021 impeachment trial.

But perhaps the highest-profile result came in Kentucky where Rep. Thomas

Massie – one of the few Republicans willing to publicly challenge Trump on key issues – lost his primary race against Trump-backed candidate Ed Gallrein.

Gallrein captured 54% of the vote after months of attacks from Trump and allies in what became the most expensive House primary race in U.S. history based on advertising spending.

Massie had drawn criticism from Trump supporters over disagreements involving a major tax-and-spending package as well as efforts involving documents connected to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The race became symbolic of a broader struggle unfolding inside the Republican Party, one centered on how much room remains for dissent among officeholders in a party increasingly aligned around Trump.

Trump allies portrayed Massie's defeat as evidence that candidates who repeatedly oppose Trump face major risks in Republican primaries.

Others within Republican circles viewed the result differently, describing Massie as a consistent conservative voice who faced political consequences for

refusing to align with Trump on every issue.

Even with Tuesday's victories, Trump's influence did not produce universal success.

In Georgia, the race for governor remains unsettled after Trump-backed Lt. Gov. Burt Jones advanced to a runoff against billionaire Rick Jackson.

Jackson invested more than \$80 million of his own money into advertising and frequently aligned himself publicly with Trump, despite Trump repeatedly clarifying that Jones remained his endorsed candidate.

While Trump's strength in Republican primaries continues drawing attention, broader political questions remain unresolved.

Some Republican officials and strategists continue wondering whether primary victories will translate into success during the general election, particularly with control of Congress hanging in the balance.

Republicans currently hold narrow majorities and face significant pressure to defend seats in both chambers.

Meanwhile, Democrats are increasing-

ly expressing optimism – publicly at least – about opportunities ahead.

One race drawing particular attention is the Senate contest in Texas involving Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Paxton, who carries Trump's endorsement, is expected to become the Republican nominee if he wins his upcoming runoff.

But some Republicans reportedly worry Paxton could enter a general election with political vulnerabilities including past impeachment proceedings and personal controversies that opponents may use during a statewide race.

Some party insiders fear national Republican organizations may now need to commit additional resources in Texas when that money could otherwise support candidates in other battleground states.

Polling has shown declining support for among independent voters, raising questions of enthusiasm heading into November.

While this week's victories reinforce Trump's power over the GOP base, the question remains whether primary dominance will translate to general election success.

Police: Men Killed in San Diego Mosque Attack Helped Prevent Larger Mass Casualty Tragedy

Staff Reports

New details released by investigators suggest the death toll from Monday's deadly shooting at San Diego's largest mosque could have been significantly higher if not for the actions of three men whom authorities say helped slow and redirect the attackers during the chaos.

Officials now say the three victims killed during the attack at the Islamic Center of San Diego played critical roles in preventing the two teenage gunmen from reaching hundreds of additional people inside the building, including dozens of children.

Authorities identified the victims as Amin Abdullah, Mansour Kaziha and Nadir Awad.

The shooting unfolded Monday, May 18th, at the mosque in San Diego's Clairemont neighborhood during one of the holiest periods on the Islamic calendar. The attack occurred on the opening day of Dhul Hijjah, a sacred period observed by Muslims worldwide.

Investigators say the suspected shooters – identified by law enforcement sources as 18-year-old Caleb Vazquez and 17-year-old Cain Clark – died from self-inflicted gunshot wounds after fleeing the scene.

According to police, Abdullah served as a security guard at the mosque and immediately recognized danger as the suspects approached the facility.

San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said Abdullah confronted the suspects and exchanged gunfire with them as they moved toward the building.

Authorities say his actions delayed the attackers and prevented them from immediately accessing classrooms and other areas inside the center where approximately 140 children had gathered.

Officials credited his intervention with allowing staff members and chil-

dren inside the mosque enough time to take shelter and enter lockdown procedures.

Police later indicated that after Abdullah was fatally shot, the suspects managed to enter portions of the center but struggled to locate additional victims because individuals inside had already hidden.

Security footage later reviewed by investigators showed the suspects moving through portions of the building while searching for targets.

The actions of Mansour Kaziha and Nadir Awad further disrupted the attack.

According to police, both men moved toward the parking lot area and drew the suspects' attention away from the mosque itself.

Authorities said the men became trapped and were unable to escape.

Chief Wahl said their actions created additional delays during the attack and likely prevented additional deaths.

"I want to be very clear: All three of our victims did not die in vain," San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said Tuesday. "Without distracting the attention, without delaying the actions of these two individuals, without question, there would have been many more fatalities yesterday."

Wahl later described the sequence investigators believe unfolded moments before responding officers arrived.

"When they drew, obviously inadvertently, the attention of those gunmen out of the door and out into the parking lot, where they subsequently died, what was coming seconds away was hundreds of police officers that everybody that was there yesterday could see. At that point, I truly believe, that's what saved the 140 kids that were just inside."

The investigation has also revealed troubling details surrounding the suspects and possible motivations.



Federal authorities executed search warrants connected to the teens and recovered more than 30 firearms including rifles, shotguns, handguns and a crossbow, along with tactical gear, ammunition and electronic devices.

Investigators also located online writings and what authorities described as a manifesto now undergoing analysis.

Mark Remily said investigators believe the suspects became radicalized through online activity.

According to officials, the online material contained extremist content involving anti-Islamic, antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric along with racist themes and references to extremist ideologies.

Authorities say the writings also praised mass shooters, including the individual responsible for the 2019 mosque massacre in Christchurch that left 51 people dead.

Remily said investigators continue examining the material to better understand both motive and radicalization pathways.

"We are dedicating every resource the FBI has to conduct a thorough analysis of that manifesto to try to learn what led to this, but I think also more importantly, how can we stop future attacks," said Remily. "They didn't discriminate on who they hated. It covered a wide aspect of races and religions, more than just the Islamic people."

Remily later said the victims had gathered at the mosque to participate peacefully in their community before encountering the attackers.

"The victims who lost their lives yesterday were there to help others be part of a community that came together in peace," he said. "Instead, they were confronted by teenagers who appeared to have been radicalized online to believe that they didn't belong because of how they looked or whether they worshipped."

The investigation remains ongoing as federal and local authorities continue reviewing digital evidence and attempting to determine precisely how the suspects developed their extremist beliefs.



CRIME BLOTTER

CRIME REPORTS PUBLISHED BY NIAGARA ACTION OVER THE LAST WEEK

-Niagara Falls Woman Escapes After Being Beaten and Dragged Into House. Law enforcement received a call around 7:28am on May 13th after reports of a violent assault on Willow Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and victim told police that a male “beat her” and “dragged her” to his house. She was able to escape once inside of the house and, at the time of the call, was heading in the direction of Bucks Pizzeria on Pierce Avenue. The call was then disconnected. She did not answer upon callback. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was arrested or what injuries the woman sustained. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Resident Threatens to Shoot Postal Carrier with Firearm in Street. Law enforcement received a call around 4:25pm on May 14th after reports of menacing on the 2700 block of 21st Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, who is a U.S. Postal Service mail carrier, told police that a resident “has his address” and “verbally threatened to shoot him and another mail carrier because he didn’t like the answer to a question [that he had].” No weapon was ever displayed and the mail carrier was waiting down the street for police to arrive. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Man Threatens to Shoot Clerk at Niagara Falls 7-Eleven. Law enforcement received a call around 2:40pm on May 13th after reports of an armed robbery at 7-Eleven on the 2000 block of Pine Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and female victim told police that a male was arguing with employees in the store and told her that he was going to “pull a gun out and shoot her.” He then left and said he would “be back. She told police that his first name was Will. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was located and arrested. However, police were able to identify the suspect as Will Smith. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Walking Home Nearly Abducted in Broad Daylight, Neighbor Intervenes. Law enforcement received a call around 12:36pm on May 15th after reports of an attempted abduction on the 2800 block of Highland Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and female victim told police that she was leaving a local deli when a Jamaican man in a truck tried to abduct her. She was able to escape his grasp due to a neighbor who observed the abduction occurring and stepped in. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male was located after he fled in his vehicle, of which law enforcement was given a description.

-Children Seriously Injured in Niagara Falls Dog Attack, Bystander Stabs Dog. Law enforcement received a call around 6:09pm on May 14th after reports of a dog bite involving a minor and a stabbing on Linwood Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller advised police that a dog bit her and two other children. An unknown male who witnessed the attack then stabbed the dog and then fled the scene. The dog was not fatally injured and was still “wandering around.” Multiple serious injuries were reported. Police and medical responded to the scene. It is unknown if the dog was located and apprehended by animal control.

-Wig Stolen After Niagara Falls Street Fight Leaves Two Women Injured. Law enforcement received a call around 4:23am on May 16th after reports of an assault and robbery on the 1300 block of Elmwood Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and victim told police that a black female wearing all black with curly hair attacked her and her friend. The unknown suspect punched them causing injury and then stole her friend’s wig. She then fled west toward Tops on Portage Road. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the female suspect was located and arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Punched in Face Before Boyfriend Smashes out Vehicle Windows. Law enforcement received a call around 3:05am on May 16th of an assault and property damage on Cleveland Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and female victim told police that a male (name was given to police) “punched her in the face” and was now outside smashing out the windows of her car. A second caller advised police that he had a gun on him. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was located and arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara County Inmate Throws Dirty Toilet Water on Corrections Officers. A Niagara Falls man already incarcerated inside the Niagara County Correctional Facility is facing additional felony charges after throwing water from a toilet onto two correction

officers. According to the Niagara County Sheriff’s Office, the incident happened on May 14th inside the correctional facility. The Sheriff’s Office Criminal Investigation Bureau later launched an investigation into what occurred. Investigators say the inquiry determined that 35-year-old Demetrius M. Baxter, of Niagara Falls, allegedly threw toilet water at two correction officers while housed as an inmate at the jail. Following the investigation, Baxter was charged with two counts of Aggravated Harassment of an Employee by an Inmate, which are E-Felonies under New York State law.

-Fake Doctor? Man Poses as Physician to Gain Entry Into Niagara Falls Hospital Five Times. Law enforcement received a call around 11:43am on May 16th after reports of suspicious activity at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center in Niagara Falls. Dispatch was advised by hospital security that a male attempted to enter the hospital five different times pretending to be a doctor at the hospital. Security noted that he was “acting suspicious” and kept giving different reasons. Security was able to get the license plate number of the vehicle he departed in. Police obtained a name associated with the vehicle/plate within about 20 seconds and connected it an address on Pine Avenue. The male’s name is included in the police audio. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was located and arrested. His motivation for attempting to gain access to the hospital is not known at this time. No further information is available at this time.

-Woman Beaten During Violent Home Invasion in North Tonawanda. Law enforcement received a call around 3:19pm on May 16th after reports of an assault and robbery (i.e.: a home invasion with injuries) on the 4500 block of Killian Road in North Tonawanda. The 911 caller, a third party, told police that a 38-year-old female was at her mailbox claiming that she was “beaten and robbed inside [her] residence.” The female then returned to the home and stated that the suspect left the scene. The extent of her injuries are unknown. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male suspect was located and arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Bats, Knives and Chaos: Wild Niagara Falls Neighborhood Brawl Erupts. Law enforcement received a call around 2:22pm on May 17th after reports of a brawl with weapons in the area of 15th and LaSalle Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller told dispatch that a large group of people between 13th and 15th Street, armed with knives and bats, are fighting. Dispatch was attempting to gather additional information when the audio cut off. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if any participants were arrested or if there were any injuries. No further information is available at this time.

-Woman Runs Into Street Hitting Herself and Screaming for Help in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 10:10pm on May 17th after reports of disorderly conduct and a possible medical emergency in the area of Pine Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller told police that in the alley that runs between Diamonds and the Como, a black female wearing a red cap, black bra and black pants keeps running out into the street keeps running out in the street. Once in the street, the woman screams “help” and then repeatedly hits herself in the head. This entire sequence of events happened multiple times. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the woman was brought for a mental health evaluation and/or treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Workplace Dispute Turns Violent at Niagara Falls Fuji Grill After Co-worker Punched in the Head. Law enforcement received a call around 2:55pm on May 18th after reports of an assault at Fuji Grill on Niagara Falls Boulevard in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller told police that he was punched in the head by another employee. He was advised by management to call police and make a report. It is believed that the other employee was fired as a result of the incident. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Man Threatens to Throw Gasoline on Child and Set Him on Fire. Law enforcement received a call around 2:08am on May 18th after reports of disorderly conduct and menacing on Pine Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller – in what sounded through the police audio to be a neighbor dispute – told police that a suspect had a gas can in his hand and threatened to splash gas on the caller, his girlfriend, and a child. The suspect, whose name was given to police, was last seen running down a nearby alley. The child was not injured during the incident. Police responded to the scene. No further information is available.

Bus Stop Horror: 13-year-old Jumped by Group While Waiting for School Bus, Good Samaritan Faces Gun in Rochester

Staff Reports

A 13-year-old boy waiting for a bus in Rochester was violently attacked by a large group of suspects in the early hours of Monday, May 18th in an incident that quickly escalated into an armed robbery, a stolen vehicle pursuit, and multiple arrests, according to police.

Authorities say the attack unfolded around 7:15am on Hebard Street on the city’s northeast side.

According to the Rochester Police Department, the teenage victim had been standing and waiting for a bus when approximately eight to ten suspects arrived in two separate vehicles.

Investigators say the group then confronted and physically assaulted the 13-year-old.

As the attack was taking place, a passing driver reportedly witnessed what was happening and decided to intervene.

Police said a 48-year-old man stopped his vehicle, got out, and attempted to help the boy during the assault.

But the situation only escalated.

According to investigators, one of the suspects pulled out a handgun and pointed it toward both the teenage victim and the man who had attempted to help.

Police say some members of the group then stole the boy’s cellphone while others

took the 48-year-old man’s vehicle.

Afterward, the suspects fled the area in both the stolen vehicle and the two vehicles they had originally arrived in.

Hours later, investigators say officers located the stolen vehicle around 11am in the area of Quincy Street.

Police attempted a traffic stop but authorities said the vehicle instead sped away, triggering a pursuit.

The chase continued until the suspect vehicle reached the area of East Main and Stone streets where police say it crashed into an uninvolved vehicle.

Following the crash, four occupants – identified as two adult men and two juvenile boys –fled from the vehicle on foot.

Authorities say all four were eventually captured and taken into custody.

As of now, police have not announced formal charges.

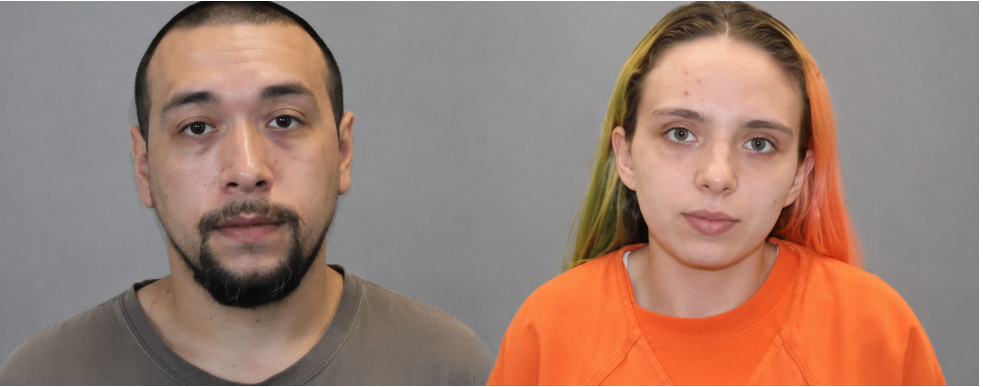
Police said the 13-year-old victim suffered upper-body injuries that were not considered life-threatening. The boy reportedly declined hospital transport and instead chose to seek private medical treatment.

Officials said the 48-year-old man who intervened was not physically injured during the incident.

No injuries were reported from the crash that occurred during the police pursuit.

The investigation remains ongoing.

Buffalo Parents Plead Guilty in Death of Infant Daughter, Judge Promises Only 1-3 Years Cont. from Cover



Staff Reports

the couple’s 2 and a half-month-old daughter, Londyn Gonzalez, whose death investigators later determined had been caused by neglect.

Authorities said police officers and emergency responders were called on July 7th, 2023, to an apartment in the 2000 block of William Street in the Town of Cheektowaga after a 911 report involving an unresponsive infant.

When first responders arrived, they found Londyn unresponsive.

The child was transported by ambulance to the former John R. Oishei Children's Hospital where she was pronounced dead.

Investigators later determined the child's death was not the result of a sudden medical emergency but rather the outcome of ongoing neglect.

Londyn had been born on April 20th, 2023, at a healthy birth weight of 6 pounds, 8 ounces.

However, during pediatric appointments in late April and early May, medical providers became concerned after noticing the infant was failing to gain weight appropriately.

Prosecutors said healthcare staff specifically instructed Gonzalez and Udrea to increase both the amount of formula provided and the frequency of feedings.

Officials said doctors had scheduled another follow-up appointment for May 8th, 2023.

The couple never returned.

After missing that appointment, Gonzalez and Udrea failed to contact the pediatric office again and never sought care from another doctor.

According to the investigation, no additional medical intervention occurred despite earlier concerns raised by healthcare providers.

At the time of her death weeks later, Londyn weighed only 8 pounds, 4 ounces.

The Erie County Medical Examiner's Office later ruled the infant’s death a homicide caused by neglect stemming from malnutrition and dehydration.

Investigators determined Gonzalez and Udrea acted together and recklessly caused the circumstances that led to their daughter’s death.

While second-degree manslaughter carries a potential maximum sentence of 15 years in prison, Judge Bargnesi indicated during the plea agreement that both defendants will receive prison terms ranging from one to three years as a condition of the negotiated plea.

Sentencing is scheduled for July 29th.

Both defendants were released under supervision pending sentencing.

Erie County District Attorney Michael Keane commended several investigators and emergency personnel involved in the case, including Detective Kevin Schmidt, Lieutenant Justin Haag, Detective Mark Fatta and Detective James Genson of the Cheektowaga Police Department, as well as members of the Doyle Fire Company.

BUSINESS & FINANCE

SHOCK ON THE BILL: WHY YOUR NEW YORK ENERGY COSTS ARE BLEEDING YOU DRY



Sumit Majumdar
President & CEO of Buffalo
Biodiesel Inc. | Limited Partner &
Director of Energy and Agriculture
at Verite Capital Partners

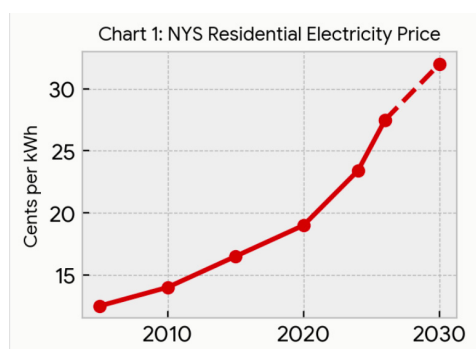
If you live in Western New York, you already know the feeling. You open your monthly utility bill, look at the number, and your chest tightens. Electricity prices are skyrocketing, and no, it's not just inflation.

Your bill is the victim of a massive, strained shift in how our electrical grid operates. To figure out why a basic necessity is becoming a luxury, we have to look under the hood of the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO)—the folks who manage the state's power grid. We're facing a perfect storm: aggressive state climate laws, a fragile power supply struggling with generator deactivations, the multi-billion dollar cost of upgrading aging distribution grids, and the sudden, staggering invasion of energy-guzzling data centers.

THE 20-YEAR CLIMB: FROM AFFORDABLE TO A BUDGET BUSTER

Not too long ago, New York's power rates were stable. In the early 2000s, ratepayers were used to paying about 12 to 14 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). Fast forward to today? Residential rates have blasted past 27 cents per kWh, and retail electricity prices nationally surged 23% between 2019 and 2024 alone. Your bill has essentially doubled.

For the average New York household, the reality of the next five years is grim. Electricity demand is forecast to grow by 1% in 2026 and 3% in 2027, driven largely by the data center



boom, which is expected to keep prices trending upward through 2030.

What does this mean for your wallet? An average household power bill that used to be \$150 a month is now routinely hitting \$250 to \$300. Annually, this translates into \$3,000 to \$3,600 stripped from a family's budget just to keep the lights and heat on. If current trends continue, annual household electricity costs could easily breach \$4,000 by 2030.

Why the huge spike? Much of it comes down to how New York buys power.

It's an auction. The grid operator takes the cheapest power bids first (like wind and hydro). But when demand spikes, they have to accept bids from the most expensive power plants just to keep the lights on. In these wholesale electricity markets, demand-driven spike prices act as the primary determinants of major price fluctuations, generating extreme marginal costs that are ultimately passed down to consumers (Li et al., 2019).

Furthermore, utilities are passing the costs of aging grid infrastructure down to you; nationwide capital spending on distribution grids increased by 160% from 2003 to 2023, hitting \$50.9 billion.

THE ENERGY MIX: WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY BURNING?

State politicians love to tout a green future, largely driven by the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Passed in 2019, the CLCPA legally mandates an aggressive transformation of the state's energy system, targeting a 70% renewable grid by 2030 and a fully zero-emissions power system by 2040 (Liu et al., 2021).

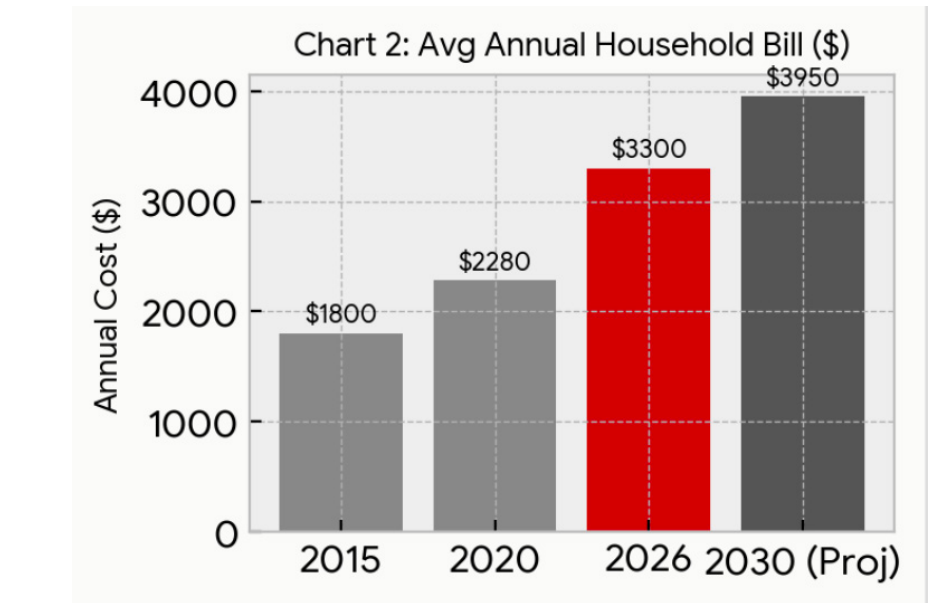
But let's look at the reality of the grid today. Roughly half of the electricity generated in New York State still relies on natural gas. When the weather gets extreme, that reliance skyrockets.

During a severe winter cold snap in early 2026, fossil fuels provided a massive 62% of the state's power to meet peak loads. Nuclear energy provided 19%, and hydro provided 14%. Meanwhile, wind and solar drastically underperformed, contributing negligible amounts during the highest demand periods.

The cost to produce this energy is highly volatile. In 2024, the wholesale price of electricity in New York averaged \$41.81 per Megawatt-hour (MWh). In 2025, because natural gas prices spiked 120% higher than the previous year, wholesale electricity prices surged to \$74.40/MWh. When gas prices jump, your bill goes right up with it.

Additionally, state mandates add direct fees: consumers subsidize clean energy through Zero-Emission Credits (ZECs) and Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), which for 2026 are priced at \$1.65/MWh and roughly \$2.00/MWh respectively.

THE DIRTY REALITY OF "PEAKER" PLANTS



To understand why peak power is so expensive, you have to understand "peaker" plants. These are highly polluting oil and gas-burning power plants that typically operate at low capacity factors—less than 15% of the time—firing up only when demand is highest.

Between 2023 and 2025, New York implemented strict nitrogen oxide emission limits aimed at phasing out these inefficient peaker plants. But reality hit hard: generator deactivations are now outpacing new supply additions.

Research indicates that during extreme weather events, covariability between high load and low wind/solar yields major short-term resource gaps that must be filled by dispatchable resources (Doering et al., 2023). Consequently, the NYISO has explicitly warned that traditional fossil-fueled generation is still desperately needed to maintain grid reliability and prevent blackouts.

Here's the kicker regarding costs: under NYISO "market-clearing price" rules, all power generators get paid whatever the highest, most expensive price is at that moment.

Because peakers are incredibly expensive to run—often bidding well over \$100 to \$150/MWh compared to base-load hydro or nuclear—they drive up the price for the entire market. Until reliable, dispatchable emissions-free technologies are actually built, we are trapped paying premium prices for dirty power just to keep the lights on.

MEGAWATT MONSTERS: THE DATA CENTER INVASION

While we struggle to maintain a reliable power supply, demand is exploding. Ten years ago, data centers were just big server rooms. Today, fueled by the rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cryptocurrency mining, hyperscale data centers are becoming the biggest power hogs on the planet.

Forecasts project an incredible 3,200 MW to over 5,000 MW of new large load demand hitting the New York grid by 2030.

Look at Western New York's Genesee County. A single hyperscale data center campus at the STAMP site is projected to suck up 500 Megawatts

(MW) of power.

To put that in perspective, 500 MW is enough to power half a million Upstate New York homes.

What happens when a monster like that plugs in?

Our margin for error vanishes. Shrinking reliability margins mean that consumers face a much greater risk of outages. The grid will be forced to run those ultra-expensive gas "peaker" plants more often, and utilities will have to spend billions more to upgrade local distribution networks.

THE BOTTOM LINE

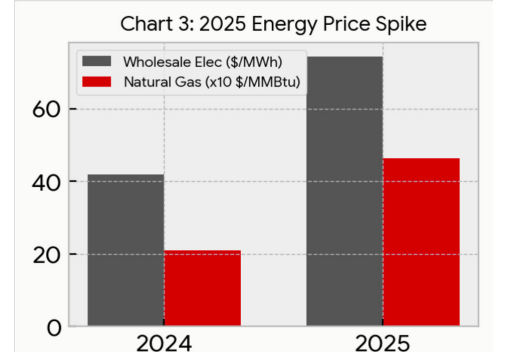
We are caught in a brutal vise. On one side, public policy is driving fossil generators into retirement without adding new carbon-free resources fast enough to replace them. On the other side, an AI-driven tech boom and building electrification are sending demand through the roof.

The math is simple, and it punishes everyday ratepayers.

The NYISO warns that New York will shift to a winter-peaking grid by the 2040s, and if gas supplies run short, we could see grid deficiencies as early as the winter of 2029–2030.

Unless lawmakers force big tech to generate its own power and realistically balance climate goals with actual grid capacity, your utility bills will continue breaking records.

Brace your wallet.



About the Author:

Sumit Majumdar is the President of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. and a Limited Partner/Lead Advisor for Energy and Agriculture at Verite Capital Partners. For over 20 years, he has been a leading voice in the fight against climate change, specializing in practical solutions for reducing carbon and methane emissions through sustainable fuel technology and industrial oversight.

FINANCIAL MARKETS & COMMODITIES

STOCK MARKET INDEXES



DOW JONES

49,363.88



NASDAQ

25,870.71



S&P 500

7,353.98



TSX (CANADA)

33,741.24



NIKKEI 225

60,550.59



SSE (CHINA)

4,169.54



FTSE 100 (UK)

10,330.55

METALS COMMODITIES



GOLD

\$4,511 per troy oz.



SILVER

\$74.53 per troy oz.



COPPER

\$12,933 per metric ton



PLATINUM

\$1,936.10 per troy oz.



PALLADIUM

\$1,359.26 per troy oz.



TIN

\$52,900 per metric ton



NICKEL

\$18,260 per metric ton



ZINC

\$3,445 per metric ton



ALUMINUM

\$3,618 per metric ton



LIVESTOCK



LIVE CATTLE

\$2.53 lb.



FEEDER CATTLE

\$3.67 lb.



LEAN HOGS

\$1.00 lb.



BEEF

\$389.11a cwt



POULTRY

\$1.39 lb.

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES



COFFEE

\$2.65 lb.



SUGAR

\$.15 lb.



CORN

\$4.67
bushel



SOYBEANS

\$11.82
bushel



WHEAT

\$5.61
bushel



COTTON

\$.819 lb.



FCOJ

\$1.54 lb.

ENERGY COMMODITIES



GASOLINE

\$4.53 gallon avg.



DIESEL

\$5.65 gallon avg.



NATURAL GAS

\$3.11 MMBtu



HEATING OIL

\$4.10 gallon



WTI (West Texas int.)

\$107.77 barrel



BRENT CRUDE

\$111.28 barrel



USED COOKING OIL (UCO)

\$.73 per lb.

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME

AS OF 6AM WEDNESDAY, MAY 20TH, 2026

NAHOME & GARDEN

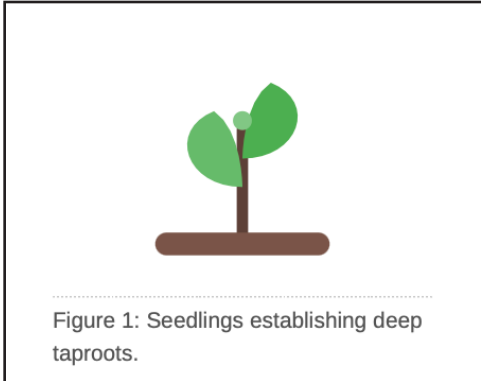
THE GARDEN GUIDE

WNY's heavy clay soils and unpredictable spring frosts demand tough plants that do the heavy lifting for you.



Sumit Majumdar
President & CEO of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. | Limited Partner & Director of Energy and Agriculture at Verite Capital Partners

a major shift. We are moving away from back-breaking weekend chores and toward resilient, purposeful



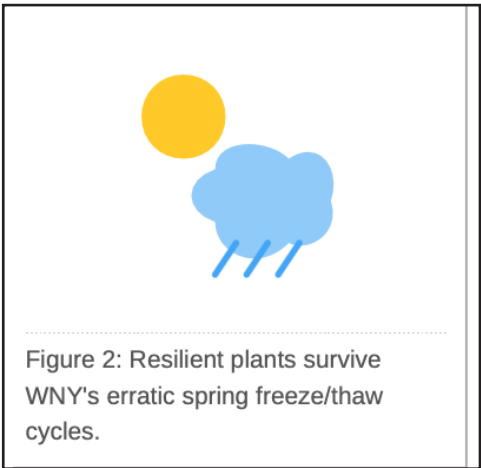
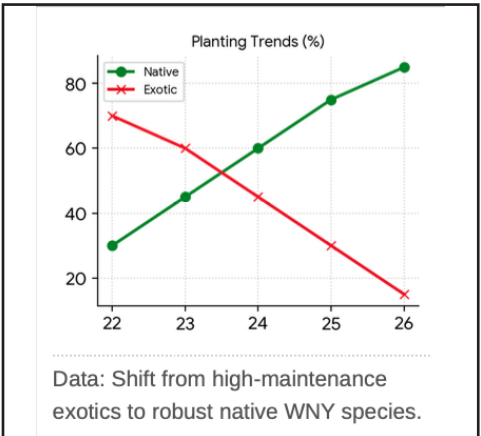
landscapes. Here is a comprehensive look at what local gardeners are planting this year, what they are skipping, and how to navigate the overwhelming fertilizer aisle to build resilient ecological systems in your own backyard.

THE 2026 WNY PLANT ROSTER

This year's overarching trend is "resilience." WNY's heavy clay soils and unpredictable spring frosts demand tough plants that do the heavy lifting for you.

What's Hot: Low-Effort "Set It and Forget It"

Natives: Native plants are dominating garden centers because they are uniquely adapted to our specific climate. Heavy hitters like Black-Eyed Susans, Butterfly Weed, and



Wild Bergamot require almost zero extra watering once established and bring in local pollinators by the swarm.

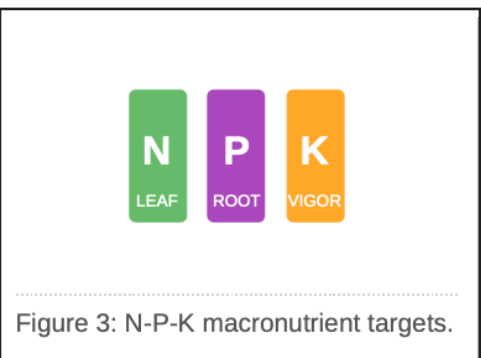
Self-Seeding Superstars: Why buy new plants every May? Gardeners are leaning heavily into self-sowing perennials like Columbine and Agastache. They drop their own seeds and naturally fill in bare spots.

Edible Landscapes: The line between the vegetable garden and the front yard is gone. People are weaving dwarf fruit trees and culinary herbs directly into ornamental flower beds.

Data: Shift from high-maintenance exotics to robust native WNY species.

What's Not: High-Maintenance Fussy Exotics: Plants that require constant babysitting, daily watering, and panic at the first sign of an October Buffalo frost are out.

Endless Annuals: Spending hundreds of dollars every spring on



delicate annuals that are guaranteed to die in six months is becoming a thing of the past. Perennials are the ultimate return on investment.

Invasive Ornamentals: Landscapers are aggressively phasing out old staples like English Ivy, Japanese Barberry, and Burning Bush, which escape yards and choke out local woodlands.

THE FERTILIZER LOWDOWN

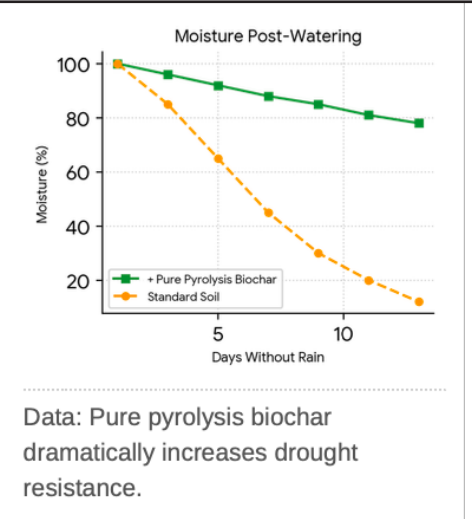
Before buying fertilizer, you have to look at the three numbers on the bag: N-P-K (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium). A helpful gardening trick is to remember "Up, Down, All Around" — Nitrogen grows the top (leaves), Phosphorus grows the bottom (roots and

blooms), and Potassium helps the overall health and immune system of the plant.

Trees: Trees are marathon runners. They hate fast-acting chemical hits, which force weak, leggy growth that snaps in winter storms. They thrive on slow-release nutrients and fungal-rich soils.

Flowers: Flowers are all about the middle number (Phosphorus). If you hit a flower bed with high-nitrogen lawn fertilizer, you will get massive green leaves and absolutely zero blooms.

Food (Veggies): Vegetables are incredibly heavy feeders. They need a steady, balanced diet to produce dense, flavorful yields. Erratically fed tomatoes will split or develop blossom-end rot.



Data: Ideal loam composition heavily features robust organics.

"If you really want to elevate your soil game and drastically reduce your need for fertilizer, look into biochar."

The Next-Level Soil Hack

Crucially, high-grade biochar must be sourced via pure pyrolysis (avoid anything that has been gasified, as it burns off the vital carbon structure necessary for true biochar).

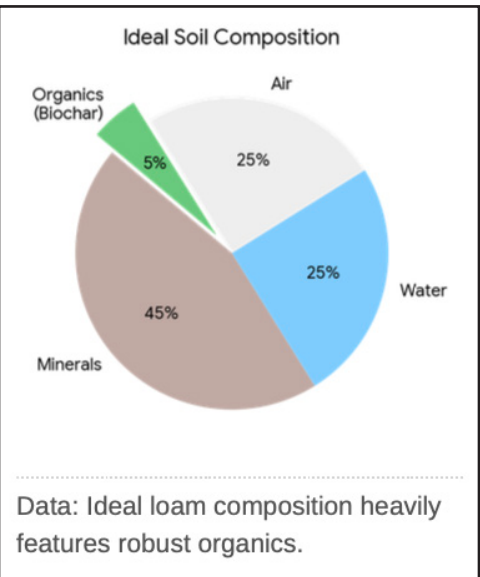
Biochar acts as a permanent, microscopic sponge in the soil. It locks in water, harbors beneficial microbes, prevents nutrient runoff, and acts as a high-permanence carbon-negative sink right in your own backyard.

Data: Pure pyrolysis biochar dramatically increases drought resistance.

ORGANIC VS. SYNTHETIC

When you are staring at the shelves, the choice usually comes down to organic vs. synthetic (non-organic) options. Synthetics offer an immediate spike, whereas organics focus on building soil biology for long-term health.

Organic Fertilizers (Bone meal, compost, biochar): Feeds the soil microbiome, which then naturally

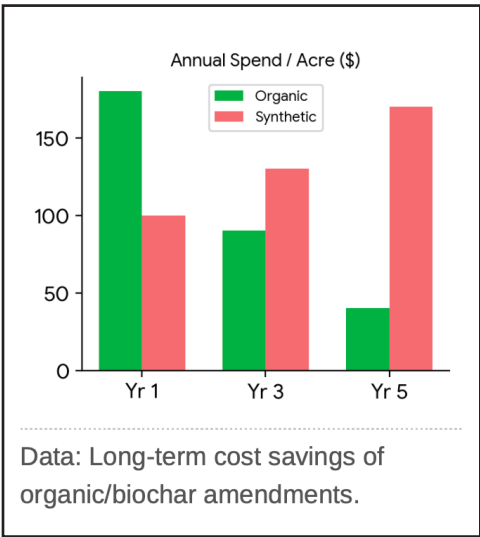


feeds the plant. It is slow to act as it takes time for microbes to break it down. While generally more expensive upfront, it builds soil quality, reducing long-term costs. It is almost impossible to "burn" your plants and is highly sustainable.

Non-Organic / Synthetic (Chemical salts): Bypasses the soil to feed the plant roots directly. It is fast and provides immediate nutrient uptake. It is cheaper at the register, but requires continuous, repeated applications year after year. It does nothing for soil health, carries a high risk of chemical burn, and excess leaches into WNY waterways.

The Final Verdict

If you are new to gardening, organic fertilizers are much more forgiving — you can't accidentally fry your plants by being a little heavy-handed. If you are an experienced green thumb, you might keep a small bottle of synthetic on hand



for targeted, emergency fixes in potted plants, but build your foundational, long-term beds entirely on organics, quality compost, and smart soil amendments like biochar.

About the Author: Sumit Majumdar is the President and CEO of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. For over 20 years, he has been a leading voice in the fight against climate change, specializing in practical, heavy-industrial solutions for reducing carbon and methane emissions, and establishing sustainable circular economies.

HOME & GARDEN CONT.

LIQUID GOLD FROM SMOKE: How an Ancient Farming Secret Can Transform Your Home Garden

Sumit Majumdar
President & CEO of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. | Limited Partner & Director of Energy and Agriculture at Verite Capital Partners

The weather is getting better, and we are all planting our gardens. Yet, there is a powerful tool that many Upstate New Yorkers are completely unaware of: wood vinegar. If you add this to your garden mix this year, you will be surprised by the results you get. First of all, what exactly is wood vinegar, how is it made, and how does it work in your garden?

Also known as pyroligneous acid, wood vinegar is the condensed liquid created during the pyrolysis (burning without oxygen) of plant biomass—typically during the production of biochar or charcoal. It captures the essence of wood smoke in a liquid form. While it may look like dark iced tea and smell like a campfire, wood vinegar is a highly complex biological stimulant. It is emerging as a potent, versatile tool for commercial farmers and homesteaders alike.

WHAT EXACTLY IS IT?

Wood vinegar contains over 200 distinct organic compounds. Because it is derived from the thermal decomposition of plant matter, its makeup is highly complex and synergistic. A typical high-quality distillation contains:

- Water (80%–90%): The base solvent, extracted as moisture from the wood during pyrolysis.
- Acetic Acid (3%–7%): The primary active organic acid. It acts as a penetrant, lowers pH, neutralizes alkaline odors (like ammonia), and feeds beneficial microbes at high dilutions.
- Methanol (1%–2%): Acts as a natural solvent that helps organic compounds penetrate leaf cuticles and insect exoskeletons.
- Acetone & Ketones (<1%): Volatile compounds that contribute to the strong odor, acting as a powerful natural insect repellent.
- Phenolic Compounds (1%–3%): The source of the “smoke” smell. Phenols have strong antimicrobial, fungicidal, and antioxidant properties.
- Esters & Alcohols (<1%): Contribute to plant growth stimulation and overall biochemical synergy.

THE SMELL, HANDLING, AND SAFETY

If you open a bottle of wood vinegar, you will be hit with a pungent, heavy barbecue or campfire smoke scent. Because of its acidic nature (pH levels around 2.5 to 3.0), the concentrated liquid should be handled with care.

Toxicity and Risks: In its undiluted, raw form, wood vinegar acts as an organic herbicide and will burn and kill your plants. You should avoid getting the raw concentrate in your eyes or leaving it on your skin, as the high acidity can cause irritation. However, when properly diluted, it is completely safe.

Because it is naturally derived, it leaves behind no toxic synthetic residues, making it highly safe for children, pets, and local wildlife to be around once applied to the garden.

HOW TO USE IT IN YOUR GARDEN

Wood vinegar is rarely used as a standalone fertilizer because its NPK value is virtually zero. Instead, it acts as a fertilizer enhancer. Here is how you can put it to work at home:

Supercharge Your Fertilizer

By mixing a diluted solution of wood vinegar with traditional liquid fertilizers, gardeners can dramatically increase the efficacy of their nutrient applications.

Wake Up Your Soil

Applying diluted wood vinegar directly to the soil acts as a prebiotic for beneficial soil microbes. This microbial explosion breaks down locked-up nutrients, typically leading to a 20% to 40% increase in root mass.

Natural Pest & Disease Control

Wood vinegar is a powerful repellent and preventative agent. The prominent “smoke” odor triggers a natural flight response in many insects.

Speed Up Seed Sprouting

Soaking seeds in a highly diluted wood vinegar solution for 24 hours before planting softens the seed coat and penetrates the endosperm. This results in higher germination percentages and significantly faster emergence times.

Fix Smelly Compost and Coops

Spraying wood vinegar over compost piles or inside livestock enclosures instantly neutralizes harsh odors by binding its acids with highly alkaline ammonia gas.

THE MAGIC RECIPE: DILUTION RATIOS

The success of its application relies entirely on exact dilution ratios tailored to the intended agricultural task. Here is your home guide (parts water to 1 part wood vinegar):

- Foliar Spray (Spraying plant leaves): 500:1 (About 1 teaspoon per gallon of water)
- Soil Drench & Seed Soaking: 200:1 (About 1 tablespoon per gallon of water)
- Compost Accelerator: 50:1 (About 2.5 tablespoons per gallon of water)
- Organic Weed Killer: 5:1 (Spray directly on weeds in full sun)

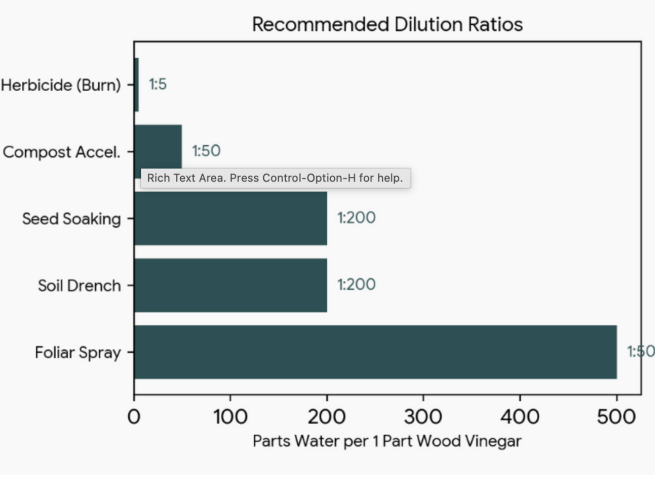
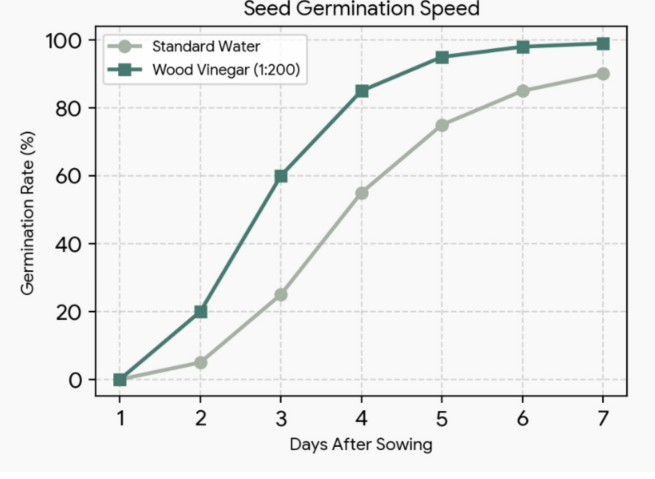
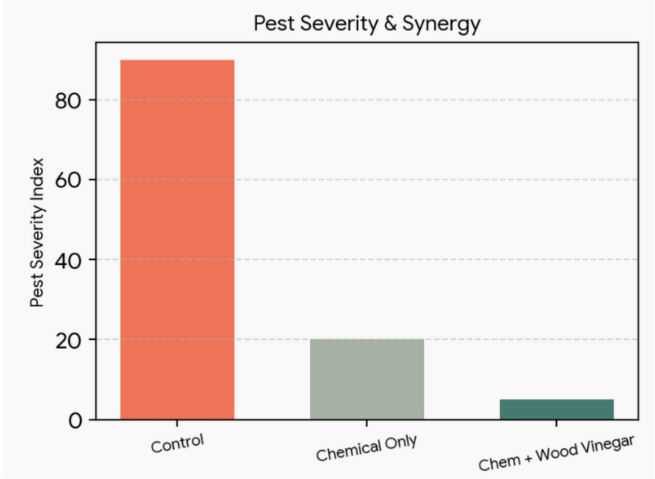
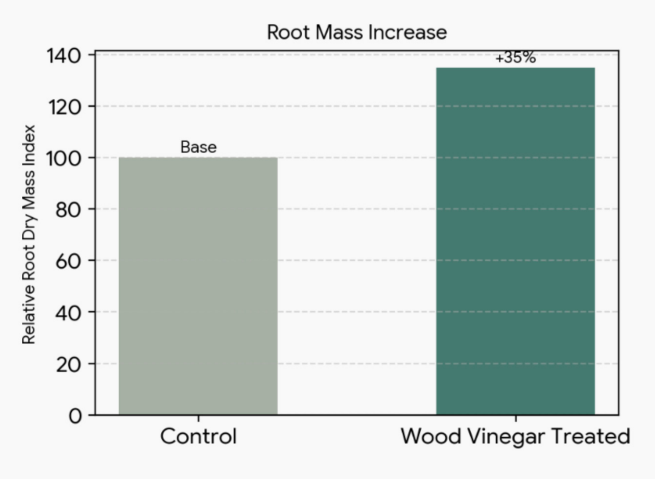
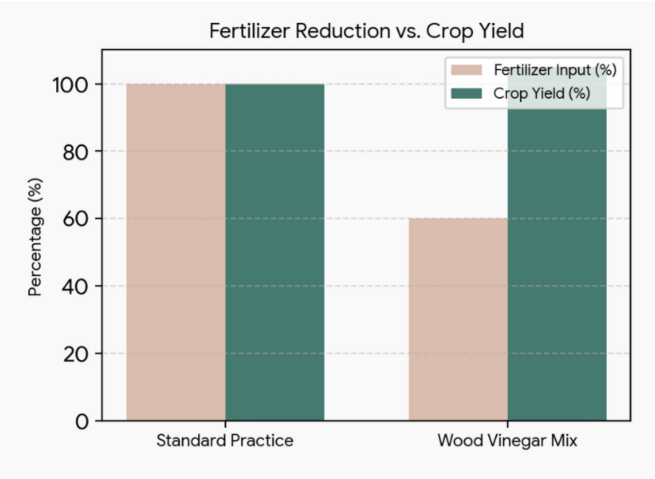
WHERE TO BUY & WHAT IT COSTS

You don't need industrial farming supply contacts to find wood vinegar today.

Where to Buy: It is readily available on major e-commerce platforms like Amazon, specialty organic farming websites, and high-end local garden centers. You may also see it labeled as “Bamboo Vinegar,” which behaves identically.

Retail Cost: A standard 32-ounce (1-quart) bottle typically costs between \$15 and \$30. While this might sound a bit pricey for “vinegar,” remember that a single quart will yield up to 125 gallons of foliar spray due to the extreme dilution required. A single bottle can easily last the average home gardener for an entire year.

Wood vinegar is not a silver bullet, but its performance as an amplifier makes it invaluable. By improving how plants use existing water, nutrients, and chemical defenses, it allows modern agriculture—and your home garden—to do more with less.



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ARTS,EVENTS&ENTERTAINMENT

'A Great Night Out': Artpark to welcome legendary Who icon Sir Roger Daltrey

Staff Reports

Artpark & Company announces legendary performer Sir Roger Daltrey will bring his “A Great Night Out” tour to the Artpark Mainstage Theater in Lewiston at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17.

Rock legend Daltrey announced a run of U.S. solo tour dates, celebrating his return two years after his widely praised “Semi-Acoustic 2024” summer outing – and well-rested from the acclaimed Who farewell tour that critics hailed as a powerful nod to the rock canon. The much-anticipated solo trek has been dubbed “A Great Night Out.”

The recently knighted rock stalwart will be backed by the same musical lineup he performed with on his 2024 tour, featuring a hand-picked ensemble of musicians: Simon Townshend (guitar), Billy Nicholls (mandolin), Jody Linscott (percussion), Doug Boyle (guitar), John Hogg (bass), Katie Jacoby (violin), Steve Weston (harmonica), Geraint Watkins (keyboards/accordion) and Scott Devours (drums).

The 2026 dates will spotlight Daltrey’s unmistakable voice and deep catalog, blending iconic selections from his remarkable solo material, reimagined cover songs and Who rarities.

Daltrey will be building on the momentum of his 2024 performances, which were widely celebrated for their acoustic intimacy, storytelling, and enduring vocal presence, with Daltrey also offering up renditions of songs seldom performed live by him or The Who.

The 2024 tour drew raves, with USA Today commenting, “Put Roger Daltrey on a stage and he’s going to rock”; and Forbes calling attention to the casual interplay of songs and stories delivered by a relaxed and funny Daltrey – “witty, charming, and engaging. An absolute masterclass.”

The upcoming shows promise another fresh, revealing glimpse of the charismatic singer, with more banter and straight-shooting rapport

as he continues to reign as one of rock’s most commanding live performers.

This past December, Daltrey was honored with a knighthood by The Prince of Wales at Windsor Castle for his contribution to charity and music. Daltrey launched and curated the “Teenage Cancer Trust” concerts initiative at the Royal Albert Hall, which has raised millions for the charity over the past 25 years.

Fans will have access to presale tickets with password GREATNIGHT beginning at 10 a.m. Wednesday, May 13. A public on-sale starts at 10 a.m. Friday, May 15. For complete details, visit <https://www.thewho.com>.

The tour will also offer a variety of VIP packages and experiences for fans to take their concert experience to the next level. Find more details here.

This Lewiston performance is presented by Artpark.

Tickets will be available for purchase online at ticketmaster.com and artpark.net; by phone from the Artpark box office at 716-754-4375; or in-person at the Artpark box office, 450 S. Fourth St. In-person sales hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday.

More about Roger Daltrey: Inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame with The Who in 1990, Daltrey received a Lifetime Achievement award from the Grammy Foundation along with the band in 2001. Daltrey and The Who co-founder Pete Townshend received Kennedy Center Honors in 2008. Considered to have one of the most recognizable singing voices of all time, Planet Rock listeners voted Daltrey rock’s fifth-greatest voice in music history. He also received stellar reviews for his unique 2018 autobiography, “Thanks a Lot Mr. Kibblewhite.” Known for his magnetic presence and rebellious creative spirit, Daltrey has also been an actor and film producer, with multiple roles in films, theater and television.

He’s released 10 solo studio albums, including the acclaimed discs “Daltrey,” “Ride a Rock Horse,” “One of the Boys” and the



2018 release “As Long As I Have You”; and such hit singles as “I’m Free,” “Giving It All Away,” “Without Your Love,” “Free Me” and “After the Fire.” Daltrey’s solo work has been compiled into two anthologies: “Martyrs and Madmen” (1997) and “Moonlighting” (2005). Queen Elizabeth awarded him a CBE for his service to music and charity in 2004.

2026 events and programs at Artpark currently or about to be on sale include:

“Sesame Street Live: Elmo’s Got The Moves” (May 28); Ryan Bingham and the Texas Gentlemen, “Still Gettin’ Away With It Tour” (Friday, May 29); “Wine & Wheels” (June, multiple events); 16th annual Artpark Fairy House Festival (June 20); Femmes Of Rock (July 10); Ziggy Marley, “Brightside Tour” (July 11); “Artcamps” for ages 8-13 (July 13-24); Sarah McLachlan, “Better Broken Tour” (July 14); Blackberry Smoke, “Rattle, Ramble and Roll Tour 2026” (July 15); “Legacy in Motion: Celebrating Miles Davis at 100,” featuring Jon Lehrer Dance Company & John Bacon and Star People (July 17); “Candlelight

Concert” with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (July 19); Shaky Graves + Dope Lemon (July 22); Djo, “Summer Tour” (July 23); “Mojitos & Mosaics” (July 25); Cole Swindell (July 30); Tori Amos, “In Times Of Dragons Tour” (Aug. 4); Gov’t Mule and JJ Grey & Mofro (Aug. 6); “Howard Jones: Things Can Only Get Better Tour,” featuring Howard Jones, Wang Chung, The English Beat and Modern English, hosted by SiriusXM’s Richard Blade (Aug. 12); “Mojitos & Mosaics” (Aug. 15); Turnpike Troubadours with special guests Muscadine Bloodline & The Creekers (Aug. 14); Andy Grammer “The Big Stupid Heart Tour,” with Walk Off The Earth (Aug. 21); The Rock Orchestra, “Arena of Fire” (Aug. 26); Sierra Ferrell, “Heavy Petal Tour” (Sept. 2); O.A.R. with Gavin DeGraw and KT Tunstall (Sept. 12); Sir Roger Daltrey, “A Great Night Out” (Sept. 17); Ray LaMontagne, “Trouble 20th Anniversary Tour” (Sept. 22); Charley Crockett, “Age of the Ram Tour,” with Durand Jones & The Indications (Sept. 29).

Stay tuned for more events and programs. Visit artpark.net for up-to-date information.

BUFFALO-NIAGARA EVENTS

MAY 1 - MAY 31

MAY 1	Alan Doyle – Buffalo State PAC	MAY 11	Free Throw – Electric City	MAY 23	Grand Funk Railroad – Seneca Allegany Event Center
MAY 1	Mo Lowda & the Humble – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 12	Drake Milligan – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 23	Buffalo Chamber Players – Asbury Hall
MAY 1	Start Making Sense – Asbury Hall	MAY 12	Silversun Pickups – Town Ballroom	MAY 23	HED PE – Rec Room
MAY 1	Material Girls – Riviera Theatre	MAY 12-15	Frankie Moreno – Fallsview Casino Resort, Avalon Theatre	MAY 23	Chris Duarte Group – Sportsmen’s Tavern
MAY 1	julie – Electric City	MAY 13	Nekrogoblikon – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 24	Dance Gavin Dance – Buffalo Riverworks
MAY 2	ATLiens – Town Ballroom	MAY 14	The Sheila Divine – Electric City	MAY 24	Between the Buried and Me – Town Ballroom
MAY 2	That Handsome Devil – Rec Room	MAY 15	Alpha Wolf – Town Ballroom	MAY 25	Revisiting Creedence – Fallsview Casino Resort, OLG Stage
MAY 2	The Royal Scam – Riviera Theatre	MAY 15-16	The Rush Experience – Riviera Theatre	MAY 25	Peter Case – Asbury Hall
MAY 3	Demon Hunter – Electric City	MAY 16	Avatar – Buffalo Riverworks	MAY 25	Wayne Newton – Riviera Theatre
MAY 3	Colin James, Matt Andersen, & Terra Lightfoot – Town Ballroom	MAY 16	In Flames – Town Ballroom	MAY 25	Carly Pearce – Fallsview Casino Resort, OLG Stage
MAY 4	Behemoth – Buffalo Riverworks	MAY 16	Hit the Lights & Major League – Rec Room	MAY 25	Duane Betts & Palmetto Motel – UB Center for the Arts
MAY 4	The Afghan Whigs – Town Ballroom	MAY 17	Clint Holmes – Riviera Theatre	MAY 28	Don McLean – Riviera Theatre
MAY 6	The Wailers – Asbury Hall	MAY 20	Mama’s Broke – Asbury Hall	MAY 29	Lespecial – Buffalo Iron Works
MAY 6	Dayseeker – Buffalo Riverworks	MAY 20	INOHA – Rec Room	MAY 30	More Than Me – Buffalo Iron Works
MAY 8	Cannan Cox – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 21	Death Angel – Electric City	MAY 30	Like Combs – Riviera Theatre
MAY 8	The Black Keys – Fallsview Casino Resort	MAY 22	Seattle Sons – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 30	Classic Albums Live performs The Wall – Fallsview Casino Resort, OLG Stage
MAY 8	LoveSexy – Riviera Theatre	MAY 23	FMX – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 31	Samantha Fish – Asbury Hall
MAY 9	Turning Virtue – Buffalo Iron Works	MAY 23	Lily Rose – Town Ballroom	MAY 31	ABBA Revisited – Fallsview Casino Resort, Avalon Theatre
				MAY 31	Smells Like Nirvana – Asbury Hall



HOROSCOPES, FUNNIES & PUZZLES

What to do in WNY with no Bills or Sabres on TV

B G L M F A M F R F P K R I I D M V R Y
G U S G O H H P R P N M L B V E C Y O J
O A R P J T H L Z F Q C D S I C R L T M
N A P P I N G I I B I P M A W L U Q T U
G A M P K L O T K U C I Y D O U N G C E
G T K M W K D O N I U L Y G R T N J Y U
T H U Z S H O P P I N G E C K T I C K F
C R Q U J D T B S F L G U A I E N U T N
P F H R D S R E A D I N G L N R G P R B
G I W P Y W B I G N A N B R G I H E A Q
N P N A C I A G H A H V U S K N N B V L
M F J I V M K W V Q M T P G N G F G E B
B L Z N S M I V B G H I I R O R L Y L E
J J W T N I N X B K I R N Y T A G P I L
H H J I B N G F Z X D U I G H B R Y N L
C T D N I G W K S O R N R F I O C R G F
J M X G G D A F M B T L K F N D N U X N
U O I Z X F D T W J R E M M G E K A Y Z
Z V B A Z R Z C C O O K I N G W W L N W
Q Y G D V Z I J G O L F I N G B T E Z X

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|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Decluttering | Traveling | Swimming |
| Cleaning | Shopping | Painting |
| Cooking | Running | Reading |
| Golfing | Working | Nothing |
| Napping | Gaming | Hiking |
| Baking | | |

Sudoku

	4		2
	2	3	4
			3
4		2	1

3	4	1	2
2	1		
	3	2	
1	2		

1		3	
		4	1
4			

4		1	3
1	3	2	
2	4		1
	1	4	2



ARIES (March 21 – April 19)

This week encourages patience and practical thinking. You may feel pressure to make quick decisions, but slowing down will work in your favor. Financial matters deserve extra attention, and a conversation later in the week could shift your perspective in a positive way.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20)

A new cycle begins as your birthday season winds down and fresh energy starts to build. Focus on personal goals and trust your instincts. Others are noticing your reliability and determination. Avoid taking on more responsibilities than necessary.

GEMINI (May 21 – June 20)

Your season begins, bringing a noticeable boost in energy and confidence. Communication becomes your strongest tool this week. New opportunities may appear through conversations, networking, or unexpected encounters. Stay open to changing plans — flexibility works to your advantage.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)

You may feel the need to slow down and recharge emotionally. Focus on rest and organization before taking on new challenges. Trust your instincts in personal matters. By the end of the week, clarity begins to replace uncertainty.

LEO (July 23 – August 22)

Friends and social connections bring new opportunities. Teamwork and collaboration may lead to progress in ways you didn't expect. Be willing to listen to different viewpoints. A spontaneous invitation or event could become a highlight of the week.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22)

Career and responsibilities move into focus. Your efforts are being noticed, even if results feel delayed. Stay organized and trust the process. A leadership opportunity or important conversation may arrive unexpectedly.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22)

A desire for change and new experiences grows stronger. Travel plans, learning opportunities, or future goals may capture your attention. Keep an open mind and avoid overanalyzing every decision. Sometimes momentum comes from simply saying yes.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21)

Financial or emotional matters may require deeper attention. Conversations that once felt uncomfortable could now lead to important breakthroughs. Avoid making assumptions and focus on clear communication. Stability follows honesty.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 21)

Relationships become the main focus this week. Cooperation and compromise create stronger personal and professional connections. Someone close may provide insight you weren't expecting. Listening carefully proves just as important as speaking.

CAPRICORN (December 22 – January 19)

Daily routines and responsibilities may feel especially busy. Staying organized helps prevent unnecessary stress. Focus on consistency rather than perfection. Small improvements in health or habits can create long-term benefits.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18)

Creativity and enjoyment return to the forefront. Spend time on hobbies, social activities, or projects that genuinely excite you. Don't dismiss ideas simply because they seem unconventional. Inspiration may appear where you least expect it.

PISCES (February 19 – March 20)

Home and family matters take priority. You may feel motivated to improve your surroundings or reconnect with loved ones. Stability comes through focusing on your foundation. A thoughtful conversation near the weekend brings reassurance.