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FREE

Rate Hikes Now in Effect for RG&E and NYSEG Customers as Utility Bills Climb

By: Staff Reports

Customers served by Rochester Gas & Electric and New York State Electric & Gas are now paying higher utility rates after temporary increases approved by state regulators officially took effect on June 1st.

The rate hikes, authorized by the New York State Public Service Commission, impact electric and natural gas customers across large portions of upstate New York, including many households already struggling with rising living expenses and energy costs.

Under the temporary rate plan, RG&E residential electric bills are increasing by approximately 2.9%, while gas bills are rising by about 1.2%. NYSEG customers are seeing a smaller increase on electric bills of roughly 0.2% while natural gas bills are increasing by approximately 1.7%.

(Cont. on pg. 10)

TOXIC TIME BOMB State Launches Investigation Into Toxic Chemicals Discovered Beneath Niagara Falls Cayuga Island Neighborhood from Decades-old Industrial Fill



By: John Watson

A routine infrastructure project on Niagara Falls' Cayuga Island has triggered a new state investigation into buried industrial contamination that may date back generations, raising fresh concerns about what lies beneath one of the city's residential neighborhoods.

The discovery was made after utility crews working on a water main project last fall reported unusual odors coming from excavated areas on the western portion of the island. The findings prompted environmental testing that revealed significant levels of toxic chemicals

(Cont. on pg. 4)

Popular Pastry Chef Released After Niagara Falls Vacation Led to Federal Detention

By: Staff Reports

A New Jersey pastry chef whose vacation to Niagara Falls ended with his detention by federal immigration authorities has been released after nearly two weeks in custody. The development comes after days of mobilization and community supports from hundreds of people across his adopted community.

Leonardo Argoti, 29, an Ecuadorian national who lives and works in New Jersey, announced his release in a brief social media post after spending more than ten days at the federal detention facility in Batavia, New York.

"I'm free," Argoti wrote on Instagram. "Thank you everyone for your support."

Argoti declined to provide additional comment about the circumstances surrounding his detention or release, saying he would speak more about the matter at a later time.

His release came after family members, friends, coworkers, community organizations and local elected officials mobilized to support him and raise money for legal representation.

A fundraising effort launched by Latinos of Montclair, a nonprofit organization focused on civic engagement and cultural programming, reached its goal within days. Family members said the money allowed them to retain an attorney to review Argoti's immigration case and advocate on his behalf.

"Leo's release is a victory not just for him and his family, but for all of Montclair," said Natalia Espejo, president of Latinos of Montclair. "From the moment he was detained, our community refused to stay silent."

(Cont. on pgs. 3)

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THE REALITY OF OUR SHORELINES

The Dirty Truth Behind Erie and Niagara County Beach Closures



By: Sumit Majumdar

Summer is here and the beach closures and no swim bans that seem to come with it every year. Let's look at why it's happening, why you need to respect the bans, and what we can do as a community to tackle it. We will also talk about what it does to aquatic life and the dogs that are unfortunate enough to drink from it.

The State of Our Local Beaches

Over my two decades living in Erie County, I've watched our relationship with Lake Erie and Lake Ontario evolve. We have some of the most beautiful freshwater resources in the world right in our backyard. Yet, every

(Cont. on pg. 8)



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NIAGARA TOURISM

New Carnival Takes Over Downtown Niagara Falls This Weekend — Rides, Games, Food & More

Mention a 716 Area Code at the Ticket Booth and Receive \$5 Off Unlimited Ride Wristbands.

Staff Reports

A new family-friendly event is set to arrive in downtown Niagara Falls this month as Old Falls Street USA prepares to host a three-day summer carnival designed to bring rides, games, food and live entertainment to the city's tourism district.

The inaugural event will take place from Friday, June 19th through Sunday, June 21st along Old Falls Street USA, the three-block cobblestone corridor connecting Niagara Falls State Park to the Niagara Falls Convention Center.

Organizers say the carnival is being introduced as part of an ongoing effort to create more activities for local residents and visitors while encouraging families to spend time in downtown Niagara Falls during the busy summer tourism season.

The event will transform Old Falls Street into a midway-style attraction featuring carnival rides, classic games, food vendors and live entertainment. Organizers hope the carnival will provide an affordable option for families looking for entertainment close to home while also adding another attraction for tourists already visiting Niagara Falls.

"This event is all about creating a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere where local residents can come together and enjoy the energy of downtown Niagara Falls," said Kim Barrus, director of events for Old Falls Street. "The summer carnival adds another exciting attraction to Old Falls Street USA and gives

families an affordable way to experience rides, games, food and entertainment right in the center of the city."

The event is being designed to appeal to children, teenagers and adults alike with attractions spread throughout the downtown entertainment corridor.

Visitors can expect a variety of carnival rides and midway games along with food trucks and traditional fair-style concessions. Festival organizers say the event is intended to provide a classic carnival atmosphere in one of Niagara Falls' most recognizable public spaces.

To make the event accessible to families, several ticketing options will be available. Guests will be able to purchase unlimited ride wristbands for \$30 while individual ride tickets and family ticket packages will also be sold onsite.

Local residents will receive an additional incentive to attend. Organizers announced that residents living within in 716 area code can receive a \$5 discount on carnival wristbands by mentioning their residency when purchasing tickets.

The carnival will operate during evening hours on Friday before expanding to full day-time and evening schedules over the weekend.

Hours are scheduled for 5pm to 10pm on Friday, noon to 10pm on Saturday and noon to 8pm on Sunday.

Admission to Old Falls Street and the carnival grounds will be free, allowing visitors to walk through the event and enjoy the atmosphere without purchasing a ticket. However, fees will apply for rides, midway games, food



and beverages.

The carnival represents another addition to the growing lineup of seasonal programming hosted on Old Falls Street throughout the year. The downtown venue regularly serves as the site of festivals, concerts, outdoor entertainment and community events designed to draw both residents and tourists into the city's core.

Located just steps from Niagara Falls State Park, Old Falls Street is one of the main gathering spots for many of Niagara Falls' largest public events. Its location between the state park and convention center places it at the center of one of the region's busiest tourism corridors.

Programming on Old Falls Street USA continues to be supported through partnerships involving Niagara Falls State Park, Empire

State Development through its subsidiary USA Niagara Development Corporation, and the City of Niagara Falls.

Officials say those partnerships have helped establish a steady calendar of events aimed at increasing activity downtown while providing entertainment opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

The summer carnival marks the latest effort to expand those offerings and provide an additional attraction during one of the busiest tourism periods of the year.

Additional information regarding the summer carnival and future Old Falls Street events can be found at www.niagarafallsusa.com/ events.

Proposed Second Observation Wheel Near Niagara Falls at Queen Victoria Park Draws Opposition as Province Pushes Tourism Expansion Plan

Staff Reports

A provincial proposal to construct a second observation wheel near Niagara Falls is facing growing criticism from local residents and political leaders who argue the attraction would be an inappropriate addition to one of Canada's most recognizable public spaces.

The project is part of Ontario's ambitious Destination Niagara strategy, a sweeping tourism development initiative designed to significantly expand the region's tourism economy and increase visitor spending throughout Niagara Falls and surrounding communities.

Under the proposal, a large observation wheel would be constructed within or adjacent to Queen Victoria Park overlooking Niagara Falls. The attraction would join a broader list of tourism projects included in the provincial plan, which aims to further develop Niagara as a year-round destination capable of attracting even more visitors from around the world.

Niagara Falls already welcomes roughly 13 million visitors annually, making it one of the most visited tourism destinations in North America. Provincial officials believe additional attractions, transportation improvements and hospitality investments could substantially increase that number while generating new economic activity and jobs.

The observation wheel proposal is currently in the procurement phase. The Niagara Parks Commission has invited private-sector companies to submit proposals to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the attraction under a long-term lease arrangement. Interested developers have until June 23rd to submit plans.

While provincial officials view the project as an

opportunity to enhance Niagara's tourism offerings, opponents argue the attraction would fundamentally alter one of the most scenic and historically significant areas surrounding the falls.

Among the most vocal critics is Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates who has launched a petition campaign opposing the proposal. Gates argues that Queen Victoria Park serves as valuable public green space and that inserting another large commercial attraction into the area would detract from the natural beauty that draws millions of people to Niagara Falls in the first place.

According to Gates, public reaction to the proposal has been overwhelmingly negative. He reported receiving thousands of petition signatures within hours of launching the campaign, saying many residents are frustrated by the possibility of placing a towering amusement-style attraction next to one of the world's most famous natural landmarks.

Gates has repeatedly emphasized that Queen Victoria Park is a public space centered around the falls themselves and should remain focused on preserving views and access to the natural wonder rather than introducing another commercial attraction.

One of the major concerns raised by opponents is the possibility that the structure could obstruct or compete with views of Niagara Falls from portions of the park. Critics argue visitors come to the area to experience the falls, not additional amusement rides.

Supporters of the project, however, contend that Niagara Falls must continue evolving if it hopes to remain competitive with other international tourism destinations.

Comments posted online in response to Gates' campaign have shown some residents and visitors backing the proposal. Supporters argue additional attractions could encourage longer stays, increase

spending and generate new tourism revenue for local businesses. Some have suggested the observation wheel could become another iconic attraction and even exceed the scale of the existing wheel on Clifton Hill.

The newest Niagara Falls iconic photo destination, if you will.

The debate has also raised questions about whether Niagara Falls actually needs a second observation wheel.

The city already features the Niagara SkyWheel, a 175-foot-tall attraction located on Clifton Hill just a short distance from Queen Victoria Park. The existing observation wheel has operated for roughly two decades and remains one of the area's most recognizable tourism attractions.

The SkyWheel features enclosed climate-controlled gondolas and overlooks Clifton Hill's collection of arcades, wax museums, funhouses and other entertainment venues.

Opponents of the new proposal argue that the existing attraction already fills the market for observation wheel experiences and that another wheel would add little value while potentially altering the character of Queen Victoria Park.

Critics maintain that an observation wheel may fit naturally within the entertainment-focused atmosphere of Clifton Hill but does not belong within a historic park setting adjacent to Niagara Falls.

The proposed wheel is only one component of the Destination Niagara strategy unveiled by the Ontario government.

The broader plan seeks to expand Niagara's estimated \$3 billion tourism economy through a series of major developments. Among the concepts outlined are additional gaming opportunities, redevelopment of a historic hydroelectric facility into a

luxury five-star boutique hotel, improvements to the Niagara Parks marina in Fort Erie and construction of a 3.8-kilometer all-season electric tram system running through Queen Victoria Park.

Provincial officials have framed the initiative as a long-term investment designed to position Niagara Falls as a premier global destination capable of attracting visitors throughout the year rather than primarily during peak tourism months.

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism has indicated that the strategy is intended to boost visitation, create jobs and strengthen local economic activity through investments in attractions, transportation, arts and hospitality infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Niagara Parks officials have emphasized that taxpayers would not be responsible for financing the observation wheel project.

According to the agency, any attraction selected through the current procurement process would be entirely funded by private developers. Niagara Parks has stated that neither the commission nor Ontario taxpayers would be investing public funds into the project.

Officials say the goal is to leverage private-sector investment to create new tourism experiences without requiring direct public expenditures.

Because the procurement process remains active, Niagara Parks has declined to provide detailed commentary regarding specific proposals or potential designs that may be submitted.

For now, the future of the proposed observation wheel remains uncertain. Provincial officials continue moving forward with the Destination Niagara plan while opponents are working to convince decision-makers that Queen Victoria Park should remain focused on the attraction that has drawn visitors for generations—Niagara Falls itself.



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LOCAL NEWS

NIAGARA FALLS

Popular Pastry Chef Released After Niagara Falls Vacation Led to Federal Detention (Cont. from cover)

Community Rallies Behind New Jersey Chef After Being Detained by Immigration Officials During Western New York Trip.

Staff Reports

Neighbors, local elected officials and co-workers wrote letters and gave generously to his legal defense.”

Espejo said the community response demonstrated the impact of people coming together during a difficult situation.

“This outcome shows what happens when a community stands together and insists that the people who make it home are treated with dignity,” she said. “We are overjoyed to welcome Leo back!”

The detention of Argoti first drew attention after family members revealed that what was supposed to be a sightseeing trip to Niagara Falls turned into a legal nightmare.

Argoti, who moved to the United States from Ecuador in 2021, traveled to Western New York with family and friends to visit Niagara Falls and the Buffalo area.

According to relatives, the group spent part of the trip enjoying Niagara Falls before traveling to a shopping center in Buffalo on June 1st. Family members said law enforcement officers approached the group as they prepared to enter the shopping complex and requested identification and proof of residency.

Relatives said members of the group included visitors from Argentina and Canada who presented tourist documentation when asked. Family members said Argoti provided his New Jersey driver's license but was subsequently taken into custody after officers informed him additional immigration documentation was required.

“He’s not illegally here,” said his niece Gabriela De La Torre. “So it’s shocking for us.”

At the time of his detention, family members said Argoti possessed a valid work permit, a Social Security number and

had an active asylum case pending before federal immigration authorities.

No criminal charges were announced against him.

Federal immigration officials have not publicly commented on the circumstances surrounding the detention or the details of his eventual release.

Prior to the incident, Argoti had become a familiar face in Montclair's culinary community. Since early 2025, he has served as executive pastry chef for Faubourg New Jersey and Bijoux French Pastry, where supporters say he quickly established himself as both a talented chef and a valued member of the local community.

Family members say Argoti was born and raised in Quito, Ecuador and came to the United States seeking opportunities unavailable in his home country.

During his detention, relatives said he described feeling frightened and anxious while being held, though they noted he did not report any mistreatment.

As news of his detention spread, support poured in from customers, business owners and community groups throughout northern New Jersey.

Latinos of Montclair organized a fundraising campaign that quickly gained traction online.

“A few weeks ago, Leo crafted the most delicious pastries for Faubourg’s first Flavor of South America event and our 4th anniversary celebration,” Latinos of Montclair board of directors said in the fundraiser. “Leo is a gifted pastry chef who helped make our recent Latinos of Montclair tasting event a success, sharing his craft and his warmth with all of us. Today, Leo needs us.”

The fundraising effort helped secure legal representation while supporters continued advocating for his release.



Following the announcement that Argoti had returned home, Bijoux French Pastry thanked those who supported him and his family throughout the ordeal.

“Leo is home with us,” the business wrote in an Instagram post. “Our hearts are full of gratitude for everyone who reached out, shared kind words, and kept Leo and his family in their thoughts. Your support reminded us how strong and caring this community truly is.”

Friends and coworkers had previously spoken highly of Argoti while he remained in custody.

“He is a kind, driven, very talented chef and an amazing man personally,” said Liza Stankowski, director of operations for Faubourg restaurant. “We support him and this cause completely.”

Stankowski also praised those who organized support efforts.

“We are endlessly grateful to Latinos

of Montclair for rallying the community to support Chef Leo,” added Stankowski. “We are hopeful for his return soon and wish nothing but love and support to his family. The world needs more Leos, but this one belongs right in Montclair.”

Family members said the overwhelming response from the community provided encouragement during an uncertain period.

“That for us has been a huge relief to see we have a little bit of support from the people who know him,” said De La Torre. “It’s been really great to see the people that moved to help him.”

For now, Argoti is back in New Jersey surrounded by family, friends and supporters after a vacation to Niagara Falls ended with days spent in a federal detention facility and a legal battle that drew attention far beyond Western New York.

Nigara Falls Superintendent Mark Laurie Says Goodbye – and Thank You – After 42 Year Career



Mark Laurie, Submitted

It is with immense pride, gratitude, and appreciation that I write my final column as Superintendent of Schools for the Niagara Falls City School District. On June 30, 2026, I will conclude my career with the District after 42 years of service in a variety of roles, including associate, teacher, dean, assistant principal, principal, Chief Educational Administrator, deputy superintendent, and

superintendent.

Serving as the District’s 14th Superintendent of Schools for the past 11 years has been the greatest honor of my professional life. I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to lead, serve, and work alongside countless groups and individuals who have contributed to the success of our schools.

As a proud 1980 graduate of Niagara Falls High School, and a son, brother, uncle, and father to NFCSD graduates, my roots in the District run deep and strong.

While I would be proud to speak at length about the accomplishments in the NFCSD over the last decade – improved graduation rates, the development of an athletic complex, air-conditioned schools, expanded career pathways, advanced safety measures, enhanced mental health supports, and countless other achievements – I’d much prefer to thank, honor, and celebrate the educators, staff members, students, families, and community partners that make this an extraordinary place to work, teach, and learn.

That recognition begins with the selfless group of elected Board of Education members. These individuals freely and willingly give their expertise and time to

make policy decisions that are difficult and sometimes unpopular, but ultimately serve the interests of our schools. They believe in students and do not sit on the sidelines. Thank you.

We have an administrative staff that is proportionately small in number, but huge in heart, courage, and leadership. The administrators in our schools and District Office work tirelessly to establish and maintain positive school cultures where students and employees can flourish. Thank you.

Our teaching faculty is second to none. They give and they persevere. They are dedicated, know their craft, and most critically, they uplift our students in every way imaginable. Thank you.

Our District could not run without the skilled secretaries, clerks, nurses, maintenance staff, associates, technicians, cooks, cleaners, and safety officers. You are the unsung heroes who make everything run smoothly. Thank you.

There is no job more difficult than being a parent. These are unprecedented times for young people. You guide without a roadmap. And you trust us with your most prized possessions – your children. Thank you.

Our partners and community are the village we often speak of and call upon. You never fail to donate your time, skills, and resources. I always say Niagara Falls is not perfect, but it is perfect for me. I will continue to show up for the great people in Niagara Falls because that is precisely how we build community. Thank you.

Finally, but most importantly, to the tens of thousands of students who have touched my life and career in ways you will never realize, thank you. I never wanted to work anywhere else because I absolutely love our students. I say with every ounce of sincerity: I would not trade a Niagara Falls student for anyone, anywhere, anytime. Please be proud of our District and our community; it is how we preserve the Wolverine legacy.

My future plan is to establish a healthy balance in my personal life, explore new things, and be much more spontaneous. My career in Niagara Falls was a gift, a blessing. We are well-positioned in so many ways, but much work remains. I hope and pray something our District did impacted your life and educational experience in a positive way. When I leave my office for the final time, I will walk away feeling extremely fulfilled, and for that I say: THANK YOU!

NIAGARA FALLS CONT.

Toxic Chemicals Discovered Beneath Niagara Falls Neighborhood as State Launches New Investigation Into Decades-old Industrial Fill (Cont. from cover)

State Probing Potential Health Risks After Utility Project Uncovers Contamination Beneath Cayuga Island Properties.

beneath the soil, leading state regulators to reopen questions that have lingered for decades regarding industrial waste disposal practices in Niagara Falls.

While officials emphasize that the investigation remains ongoing, environmental regulators are now examining whether contamination buried beneath residential properties could pose risks to homeowners and whether companies that may have contributed to the problem can be identified and held responsible.

According to state officials, much of Cayuga Island was developed using fill material brought in during the early and mid-20th century, when Niagara Falls was one of the world's leading centers for chemical manufacturing. During that era, industrial byproducts and waste materials were frequently used as fill for development projects before modern environmental regulations existed.

The Department of Environmental Conservation said the contaminated material discovered during recent testing appears consistent with waste generated during chemical and pesticide manufacturing operations.

State officials have stressed that the extent of any threat to public health has not yet been determined. The agency said it is actively evaluating potential exposure risks and has indicated that mitigation measures could be offered if significant dangers are identified.

Among the chemicals discovered were alpha-BHC, beta-BHC and mercury, all substances associated with historical industrial activity.

Environmental agencies classify both alpha-BHC and beta-BHC as potentially harmful compounds that are most dangerous when ingested but can also present risks through inhalation. Federal health agencies have identified both chemicals as suspected carcinogens.

Mercury presents a different set of concerns. The metal is widely recognized as a neurotoxin and has been linked to numerous health problems including neurological damage, memory impairment, coordination issues, tremors, mood disorders, vision problems and other serious medical conditions when exposure reaches sufficient levels.

State officials noted that the contamination itself is not a new discovery.

Environmental regulators first identified elevated concentrations of similar contaminants beneath portions of Cayuga Island during investigations conducted in the 1990s. At that time, however, state environmental laws were significantly different

than they are today.

According to the DEC, regulators were unable to formally classify the material as hazardous waste under the legal standards that existed at the time. Because of those limitations, the contamination did not qualify for inclusion under New York's Superfund program, preventing the state from spending cleanup funds or compelling potentially responsible parties to remediate the site.

Although regulators believed the contamination could present environmental and public health concerns, they lacked the legal authority necessary to pursue a large-scale cleanup effort.

Instead, state environmental and health officials notified property owners about elevated contamination levels and provided recommendations intended to reduce potential exposure. Residents were advised to wear protective gloves when digging in their yards and to use raised garden beds rather than planting directly in native soils.

Over the past three decades, environmental regulations have evolved considerably.

State officials say mercury and certain pesticide-related compounds are now included on lists of hazardous substances, giving regulators stronger authority to investigate contamination and pursue cleanup actions when warranted.

As part of the current investigation, the DEC has contacted five chemical companies that may have historical connections to industrial activities on the island. Officials are seeking records and information that could help determine who may have placed contaminated fill material in the area decades ago.

If a responsible company can be identified, regulators could potentially require that company to remove contaminated soil and replace it with clean fill material.

Environmental officials noted that waste disposal practices common during the 1950s and earlier often occurred before modern regulations governing fill materials, environmental monitoring and residential development were adopted.

The contamination levels uncovered during recent testing were substantial in some locations.

State sampling found concentrations of alpha-BHC as high as 28 parts per million in certain underground areas along West Rivershore Drive. That concentration is roughly 667 times higher than the state's residential soil cleanup objective for the chemical.

While the highest readings were alarming, officials noted that average and

median concentrations across samples were significantly lower than the maximum values detected.

Beta-BHC concentrations reached as high as 210 parts per million in some samples, approximately 5,000 times above the state's residential standard. As with alpha-BHC, average concentrations across all samples were considerably lower than the highest individual readings.

Mercury levels were the most consistently elevated of the three contaminants. Some samples contained mercury concentrations exceeding 1,100 parts per million, roughly 3,700 times higher than the state's residential cleanup objective.

Average mercury concentrations remained substantially elevated throughout sampled areas while median concentrations also exceeded state guidelines by significant margins.

Despite the concerning numbers, environmental officials emphasized that most of the highest concentrations were found beneath the surface rather than in soils people routinely encounter.

According to the DEC, direct exposure to surface soils remains the agency's primary concern because that is where residents are most likely to come into contact with contaminants during everyday activities.

However, officials also warned that deeper contamination could become an issue if homeowners perform excavation projects, landscaping work or construction that disturbs buried material.

Another major concern involves the possibility of vapor intrusion.

Environmental regulators say some contaminants can evaporate underground and migrate through soil before entering homes through cracks in foundations or other openings. Once inside, those vapors can accumulate and potentially affect indoor air quality.

To investigate those risks, the DEC contacted 22 property owners located along West Rivershore Drive and requested access to conduct testing.

So far, only six homeowners have allowed environmental crews onto their properties.

Testing conducted at those six locations identified one property where investigators detected slightly elevated levels of chlorinated solvents beneath the home and within indoor air samples.

Although those contaminants were different from the pesticide-related compounds and mercury that prompted the broader investigation, officials considered the findings significant enough to warrant

corrective action.

The DEC worked with the homeowner to install a mitigation system similar to those commonly used for radon removal. The system is designed to prevent potentially contaminated vapors from entering the residence and accumulating indoors.

Additional testing is now underway on those six properties to determine whether contaminated surface soils are present and whether residents face any meaningful exposure risks.

Depending on the outcome of those investigations, the state could recommend additional monitoring, cleanup measures or the placement of clean soil barriers over contaminated areas.

The remaining 16 homeowners contacted by the agency have declined to allow testing on their properties.

State officials say that refusal limits their ability to determine whether contamination exists beneath those homes or whether residents could be exposed to hazardous substances.

One homeowner publicly dismissed the state's concerns and argued that regulators were overstating the problem. The resident said he believed the soil on his property was relatively clean and opposed any effort to remove or replace it.

At this point, the investigation remains focused on the westernmost section of Cayuga Island.

According to the DEC, testing and historical information have not produced evidence suggesting similar contamination extends farther east beyond the properties currently under review.

Still, the discoveries have renewed attention on the island's industrial past and the long legacy of chemical manufacturing in Niagara Falls.

For decades, portions of the city were built atop fill material originating from factories that produced chemicals, pesticides, plastics and other industrial products.

While many of those practices occurred before modern environmental standards existed, regulators are now tasked with determining whether remnants of that era continue to pose risks to residents today.

As testing continues, state officials say their immediate priorities remain evaluating potential health impacts, identifying responsible parties and determining whether cleanup measures will ultimately be required.

For homeowners living on Cayuga Island, the investigation may finally provide answers to questions that have lingered beneath the surface for generations.

The Votes Are In: Meet Iris the Humboldt Penguin

New Name Plays Homage to a Beloved WNY Band

Staff Reports

The public has spoken, and the Aquarium of Niagara's 26th successfully reared Humboldt penguin chick will be named Iris.

Iris was one of four names selected for public vote by the Aquarium's zoological team, along with Annie, Burnett, and Theodosia. All name options had historical or cultural significance to Niagara Falls and Western New York.

The Aquarium counted more than 1,300 votes over the 10-day voting period during which fans could vote both online and while visiting the Aquarium. Iris surged as an early leader, ultimately receiving half of the votes and as many as the other three name

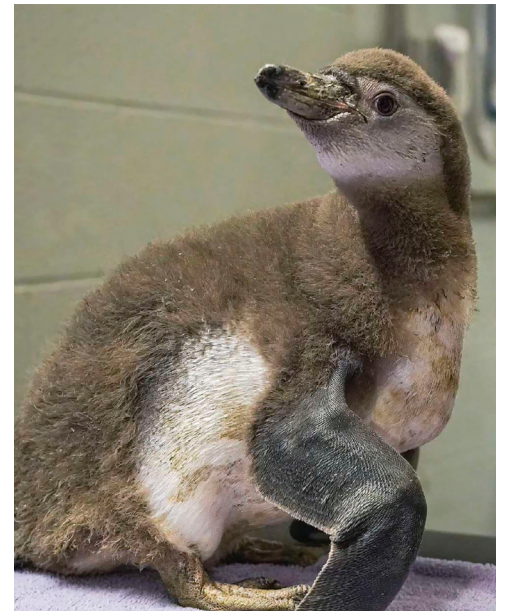
options combined.

"Iris" is the title of the Goo Goo Dolls' iconic 1998 hit song, written for the City of Angels soundtrack and released on the band's sixth studio album, *Dizzy Up the Girl*. The song has remained a critical and commercial success for nearly three decades, earning Diamond certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and ranking No. 39 on Rolling Stone's list of the 100 Greatest Pop Songs.

Iris hatched at the Aquarium in April. Her parents, PJ, Jr. and Blanca, came to the Aquarium in 2019 from the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Wash. as part of Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP) for Humboldt

penguins, which are designated as vulnerable to extinction on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. Through the SSP, the Aquarium works with other AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums to match genetically strong penguins and ensure a thriving, sustainable penguin population under human care.

Iris is currently in the nest with her parents and is not often viewable from the public gallery. She will soon go off-exhibit to a behind-the-scenes holding area for "penguin preschool" where she will learn to swim and receive food from the Aquarium's animal care specialists. Fans are encouraged to follow the Aquarium's social media channels to receive regular updates.



NIAGARA FALLS CONT.

Save Our City –It's on the Brink



Lou Rizzo, Opinion

Niagara Falls is a city on the brink – the brink of greatness or the brink of despair.

For 40 years, Niagara Falls has been in a downward spiral like a whirlpool one would see in the mighty Niagara River. Local politicians have made poor, self-serving decisions – one right after another.

They never took into account the betterment

of the community as a whole. That attitude from 745 Main Street has not changed – including presently.

The mindset here has been what can I get for me and mine. What it has been left us is a city on the brink filled with welfare and crime that goes along with it – streets unsafe to pass, neighborhoods with abandoned housing and a tax burden like no other in the country.

Niagara Falls, a city on the brink of greatness that features a wonder of the world. Nine to twelve million tourists a year set eyes on the majestic wonder of the roaring rapids as they crash over the mighty Falls. The natural beauty of Goat Island.

The proximity of Niagara Falls is a one-day drive to 100 million people. The opportunities that exist here. An infrastructure that is conducive to business.

The Niagara Falls airport features the third-longest runway in the country capable of landing a 747.

Niagara Falls borders an international country.

Forty-five minutes from the East-coast.

The opportunities are endless but the city needs a hero. A person with vision and the financial backing to turn this once great city around.

This is an open letter to the entrepreneurs of the world. It's criminal that a city in the United



States looks and feels like a third-world country compared to our neighboring city in Canada.

What a model of the right way to run and build a city. It's all here just waiting and the opportunities are endless.

In the era of government bailouts now is the time to take advantage of the opportunities that exist. The right business plan by the right person at this time in history can transform this once great city back to the splendor of yesterday.

This is a perfect opportunity to show the word that “yes we can” and “look, I did it” in Niagara Falls.”

But not with what we currently have at 745 Main Street.

The city of Niagara Falls needs a hero to help save our city. This is an open invitation to the developers of the world to come and see for yourself the endless opportunities. To be apart of what has made America great.

Lou Rizzo is a resident of Niagara Falls.

AROUND NIAGARA COUNTY

North Tonawanda Seeks \$5 Million From Niagara County for New Community Center Project

Staff Reports

The City of North Tonawanda is formally asking Niagara County to invest \$5 million toward the development of what city leaders describe as a long-overdue centralized community center that would bring youth programs, senior services, municipal offices and county services together under one roof.

The request comes after the North Tonawanda Common Council unanimously approved a resolution sponsored by Third Ward Alderwoman Hilary Roe and Common Council President Gabrielle Richards. The resolution has now been forwarded to the Niagara County Legislature and Niagara County Executive for review and consideration.

If approved, the funding would help support a major redevelopment and expansion of the Norman Keller Building at 500 Wheatfield Street. The facility currently serves as a public-facing municipal complex and houses several government offices including the City's Parks and Recreation Department, the Niagara County Department of Motor Vehicles office, Niagara County Probation services, and the North Tonawanda Community Development Corporation.

City officials say the project would transform the building into North Tonawanda's first centralized community center, consolidating services that are currently spread throughout multiple locations across the city.

Unlike many neighboring municipalities, North Tonawanda does not currently operate a single community center that serves residents of all ages. Instead, youth programming, senior activities and various municipal services operate from separate facilities.

Supporters of the proposal argue that combining those services into one modernized facility would improve accessibility, increase efficiency and create a central gathering place for residents.

“This resolution is about asking for a fair reinvestment into one of Niagara County's largest communities,” said Alderwoman Roe. “North Tonawanda residents and businesses contribute substantially to county operations every year, and this project would directly benefit families, seniors, youth, and

the broader public.”

According to information included within the resolution, North Tonawanda residents and businesses contribute significant tax revenue to Niagara County annually. City officials estimate that approximately \$14 million in county property taxes and another \$10 million in county sales tax revenue are generated each year from within North Tonawanda.

The resolution argues that despite those contributions, the city receives relatively limited county-operated infrastructure and services compared to other municipalities.

Officials note that North Tonawanda maintains and funds its own police department, fire department, public works operations and local infrastructure. The resolution further states that there are currently no county-maintained roads within city limits and no county-operated public transit routes serving the community.

City leaders contend that county participation in the community center project would represent a meaningful reinvestment into one of Niagara County's largest population centers.

“This project is not just about creating a building,” said Common Council President Richards. “It is about creating a long-term community asset that strengthens services and supports collaboration between the City and the County.”

The proposed facility would continue housing county offices already located within the building while expanding space for municipal programming and community services.

According to the resolution, the project has been designed specifically to preserve and incorporate the Niagara County DMV office and Niagara County Probation Department currently operating at the site.

City officials say maintaining those county services within the facility would create benefits not only for North Tonawanda residents but for Niagara County residents who utilize those offices.

The overall project is expected to carry a price tag between \$15 million and \$18 million.

To help cover those costs, North Tonawanda intends to aggressively pursue multiple state and federal grant opportunities. Officials identified programs including NY



BRICKS, NY Forward, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and other competitive grant sources as potential funding partners.

However, city leaders say securing county participation would significantly strengthen grant applications and improve the project's chances of receiving outside funding.

The resolution specifically states that because many state and federal programs are highly competitive and often support multiple projects simultaneously, Niagara County financial participation remains a critical component of the overall funding strategy.

In outlining its case to county leaders, the Common Council emphasized North Tonawanda's role as the second-largest municipality in Niagara County by population and a regional hub serving families, seniors and youth throughout the area.

The resolution notes that the city has already been planning and designing the community center concept at 500 Wheatfield Street.

The resolution also acknowledges existing county support in other areas including mental health services, substance abuse programs, economic development initiatives administered through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development and

various county commissions that contribute to quality-of-life improvements.

At the same time, city leaders contend that additional capital investment is warranted given the city's tax contributions and the limited amount of county-owned infrastructure located within North Tonawanda.

If Niagara County agrees to participate, the requested \$5 million would represent approximately one-third of the project's estimated total cost.

The remaining balance would be funded through a combination of grants, city resources and other available funding opportunities.

The resolution concludes by formally requesting that the Niagara County Legislature consider providing \$5 million in capital assistance toward construction and build-out of the community center while expressing the city's commitment to working collaboratively with county officials to ensure the facility provides broad public benefits.

With unanimous support from the Common Council, the proposal now moves to the Niagara County legislature who will ultimately decide whether the county will participate in funding what supporters describe as one of the most significant community infrastructure projects North Tonawanda has pursued in years.

BUFFALO

Common Council Approves Near \$6 Million Settlement with Family of Fallen Buffalo Firefighter Jason Arno

Staff Reports

More than three years after Buffalo firefighter Jason Arno was killed battling a devastating downtown blaze, the City of Buffalo agreed to a nearly \$5.9 million settlement with his estate, bringing one of the most high-profile legal battles in the city's recent history to a close.

The settlement, announced Monday, May 11th as jury selection for trial was set to begin, resolved the remaining civil claims connected to Arno's death during a March 2023 fire in Buffalo's Theater District. The payout will be distributed over a three-year period according to attorneys involved in the case.

"It's the largest court resolution of a case against the Buffalo Fire Department [and] city of Buffalo in history," said Charles Desmond, an attorney representing Arno's family. "We were looking for accountability and I think we've obtained that."

Arno's death sent shockwaves through the Buffalo Fire Department and Western New York community. The veteran firefighter died while responding to a four-alarm fire inside a Main Street building that was undergoing renovations at the time.

Investigators later determined the fire was accidental.

The civil lawsuit filed by Arno's estate alleged negligence on the part of the city and the Buffalo Fire Department in connection with the circumstances surrounding the fatal fire response.

The city denied wrongdoing, but attorneys on both sides ultimately agreed to settle before the case reached trial.

The agreement with Buffalo follows earlier settlements reached with other

parties named in the lawsuit including the owners and managers of the Main Street property where the fire occurred along with contractors working inside the building at the time the blaze broke out.

The financial terms of those previous settlements have not been publicly disclosed, though Desmond described them as "substantial."

"It's been a very tough road for the families, particularly for the wife and daughter," said Desmond. "They just do not want to see something like this happen to any more firefighters in the future."

The lawsuit became closely watched throughout Buffalo, not only because of the size of the claims involved but because it forced renewed scrutiny over firefighter safety procedures, emergency response operations and conditions inside aging downtown buildings undergoing construction or renovation.

Attorneys representing the city said the tragedy prompted a comprehensive internal review.

"This is obviously a tragedy that everybody regrets and has caused everybody to look at all policies and procedures," said Kevin Burke, a lawyer representing the City of Buffalo and the Buffalo Fire Department. "Every time there's any injury, and certainly in the rare instances if there's a loss of life, there's a top-to-bottom review of every single step in the process, and this was no different."

Despite the settlement, Arno's family and supporters say their focus remains on firefighter safety reforms and ensuring future tragedies are prevented.

"The family wants to see more," added Desmond. "And again, they're going to be actively involved. The foundation has



raised money for safety equipment for the fire department, which they donated, and will continue to do so in the future so nobody's here again for this."

Burke expressed sympathy on behalf of the city during court proceedings Monday, emphasizing the emotional toll the loss continues to have on firefighters and city officials alike.

"We extend our deepest sympathies to Firefighter Arno, his family, to his friends, and to all of his fellow firefighters and loved ones who feel his loss," Burke said.

He also stressed that ensuring Arno's surviving family members were financially protected played a major role in resolving the case.

"It's a very dangerous job, and they're all very brave," said Burke. "We care very much for each and every one of them."

Buffalo Mayor Sean Ryan released a statement supporting the settlement, de-

scribing it as a way to avoid a lengthy and emotionally draining courtroom battle.

"The loss of Jason Arno in the line of duty was a tragedy that shook Buffalo Fire Department and our city as a whole," said Ryan. "While no legal remedy can ever undo this tragic loss, we believed it was important to work toward a resolution that avoided putting Mr. Arno's loved ones and the city through a long and emotional trial."

Ryan also thanked the city's legal team and others involved in reaching the agreement.

"I want to thank the Corporation Counsel's office and all parties involved for working collaboratively to reach this agreement," said the mayor. "I hope that it provides some measure of closure for the Arno family."

The settlement was approved by the Common Council on June 9th.

More than 40 Restaurants, Six Entertainment Stages Set for 2026 Taste of Buffalo

Staff Reports

Buffalo's signature summer food festival is preparing to return downtown this July with more than 40 participating restaurants, dozens of live performances and a significant number of first-time vendors joining one of the nation's largest two-day food events.

Organizers have unveiled the restaurant lineup and entertainment schedule for the 2026 Taste of Buffalo, which will take place July 11th and 12th along Delaware Avenue and throughout Niagara Square. The annual festival is expected to once again draw tens of thousands of visitors to downtown Buffalo to sample dishes from restaurants representing a wide variety of cuisines from across Western New York.

This year's event will feature more than a dozen businesses making their Taste of Buffalo debut, alongside longtime festival favorites that have become staples of the annual celebration.

Taste of Buffalo Chairperson Adam Roma said the event continues to showcase the strength and diversity of the region's culinary community while also supporting charitable causes throughout Western New York.

"The culinary scene is one of the best things about Buffalo and all of Western New York and this year's selection of diverse and delicious foods is what makes the Taste of Buffalo one of the premiere food festivals in the nation," said Roma. "Our guests can enjoy the incredible food from more than 40 restaurants, including some old friends coming back to the event. We also have an amazing new entertainment lineup and other great activities we are excited to share in the coming weeks. We also look forward to supporting Feed-More and our scholarship fund and other local

charities with proceeds from the event."

The 2026 festival lineup includes a broad mix of restaurants, wineries, bakeries, barbecue vendors, international cuisine and dessert specialists.

Returning and participating vendors include A Gust of Sun Winery, AJ's Kitchen, Anchi A La Carte, Avenue29 Foods, Babcias Pierogi, BW's Barbecue, Caribbean Taste, D.A. Taste, Dimples Pancakes, Dirty Bird Chicken N' Waffles, Fat Bob's Smokehouse, Genevieve's Cheesecakes, Golden Hour Treats, India Gate, Is That Grandma, Just Pizza & Wing Co., KT Caribbean Cuisine, La Casa De Sabores, Merritt Winery, Milk and Tea, New Jewel of India, Nick Charlap's Ice Cream, Nickel City Vice, Not Just Cakes, Osteria at Ulrich's, Roaming Bison BBQ, Sidelines Sports Bar and Grill, Steaksters, Sweet Melody's, Tops Friendly Markets, The Bavarian Nut Company, Three Brothers Wineries and Estate, Venus Greek & Mediterranean, VICTORIANBOURNE Wine Estate and Yankee BBQ Smokehouse & Tavern.

Among the restaurants making their first appearance at the festival are Chef BigWayne Jamaican Cuisine, Hiibachi Fried Rice, La Cocina De Titi, Milk Tea'rapy, Pudgy Potatoes, Smash & Roll, Street Cravings, Sweet Minis, Sweets Lounge and Restaurant, The Quesadilla Company, The Sangwich Mother and Wind Japanese and Thai Buffalo.

Festival organizers said the expanded lineup reflects Buffalo's continually evolving restaurant scene while giving visitors an opportunity to experience both established businesses and emerging local brands.

In addition to food offerings, organizers are introducing a new entertainment format that will spread performances across six separate stages throughout the festival footprint.



Saturday's entertainment schedule features a wide range of local musicians, bands, performers and specialty acts.

Scheduled performers include The Plagiarists, P.A. Line, The Burkharts, Part Time Genius, Smac!, Tim Britt, Danielle A., The Brass Machine, Elena Izquierdo, Watch Your Step, The Spinning Plates Show, DJ Yes, Braize Lei, School of Rock and Slyboots School of Music.

Roma said organizers wanted to refresh the festival experience by giving local artists more visibility while maintaining the event's identity as a food-centered attraction.

"We really want to embrace this idea of 'Same Great Taste, Brand New Vibe,' for this year's Taste of Buffalo," said Roma. "With that, comes a revamped look at how we present local artists. We wanted each act to feel properly represented while on one of our six stages. The Taste of Buffalo will always be

a food festival first, but the entertainment that will accompany each bite is something we are very proud to present for our 43rd year."

The Taste of Buffalo has long been considered one of the largest food festivals in the United States and remains one of Western New York's most recognizable summer events.

Beyond showcasing local restaurants, the festival also serves as a fundraiser supporting FeedMore WNY, scholarship initiatives and other charitable organizations throughout the region.

Additional event details, activities and festival announcements are expected to be released in the coming weeks as organizers finalize preparations for the two-day event.

Additional information can be found at the festival's official website: www.tasteofbuffalo.com.

BUFFALO CONT.

Buffalo Biodiesel Unveils Sweeping Leadership Overhaul as Company Positions for Next Phase of Growth

Former Prosecutors, Corporate Executives and Financial Leaders Join Expanding Executive Team.

Staff Reports

Buffalo Biodiesel Inc. has launched one of the most significant executive restructurings in its history, assembling a leadership team that blends high-level legal, financial and operational expertise as the Western New York-based renewable energy company prepares for what executives describe as an aggressive expansion strategy.

Over the last several weeks, the company has announced a series of major appointments that signal a transformation from a regional waste oil collection operation into a larger, more sophisticated renewable energy and industrial infrastructure enterprise. The appointments include former Erie County prosecutor Ryan Haggerty, former federal prosecutor Jeremiah Lenihan, veteran corporate executive Frank V. Balon, and financial executive Peter Grisanti. Together, the hires represent a dramatic expansion of Buffalo Biodiesel's legal, financial and operational capabilities.

The executive expansion comes as Buffalo Biodiesel enters a period of unprecedented growth. Founded in 2005 and headquartered in Buffalo, the company currently services more than 30,000 restaurants across 15 states through one of the largest used cooking oil collection networks in the Northeastern United States. The company has become a major player in the renewable fuels sector by collecting used cooking oil and converting it into sustainable biofuel feedstocks and other environmentally beneficial products.

That growth trajectory accelerated following the announcement of a transformational \$300 million capital and growth partnership with Verite Capital Partners. The investment is intended to expand Buffalo Biodiesel's operations from 15 states to 25 states throughout the eastern United States, stretching from Montreal to Miami.

The partnership is expected to support significant infrastructure expansion including the construction of two new renewable natural gas facilities, one in the Northeast and another in Mississippi. At full funding, company officials expect the initiative to create more than 600 additional jobs.

As part of that transaction, Don Jones, Founder and Managing Partner of Verite Capital Partners, became a minority owner of Buffalo Biodiesel and assumed the role of Chairman of the Board. Meanwhile, founder Sumit Majumdar transitioned into a new position as Lead Director of Energy and Limited Partner at Verite Capital Partners while maintaining a long-term role on Buffalo Biodiesel's Board of Directors.

At the center of the transition is a changing of the guard at the company's highest level.

FRANK V. BALON TAKES THE HELM

The company's Board of Directors recently confirmed Frank V. Balon as President and Chief Legal Officer following the transition of



Frank V. Balon

founder Sumit Majumdar into his new leadership role with Verite Capital Partners.

Balon arrives with an extensive background in corporate leadership and legal operations. Prior to joining Buffalo Biodiesel, he served as Co-President, Chief Legal Officer and Board Director at Steuben Foods in Elma. During a 15-year tenure, he helped oversee significant growth, with the company nearly doubling its workforce from approximately 400 employees to nearly 800.

A graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Law, Balon built his legal career practicing commercial and business litigation in both New York City and Buffalo before transitioning into executive leadership. His combination of courtroom experience and operational management made him an attractive candidate during what the company described as an extensive nationwide search for its next leader.

Founder Sumit Majumdar praised Balon's selection, stating, "Buffalo Biodiesel has been my life's work for over two decades. After screening hundreds of talented prospects, I know I am leaving this company in the hands of a highly capable visionary. Frank possesses the exact blend of operational brilliance and legal acumen needed to scale our business, but more importantly, he shares our uncompromising commitment to environmental stewardship. He is the right leader to ensure we remain the absolute best in the industry, both as an employer in our community and as a champion for emissions reduction."

Majumdar also reflected on the company's environmental impact, stating, "I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved for the environment. Applying the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's GWP20 standards for carbon emissions, Buffalo Biodiesel has prevented millions of tons of CO₂e over the last twenty years. In 2025 alone, we successfully offset 685,850 tons of CO₂e. As Frank takes the helm, I firmly believe his leadership will drive us to break the one-million-ton annual offset mark and set new industry benchmarks for sustainability within a year."

Under Majumdar's leadership, Buffalo Biodiesel grew from a startup operation into one of the nation's largest waste cooking oil recycling firms, expanding service to tens of thousands of restaurants while building a reputation for technological innovation and aggressive enforcement against theft and organized criminal activity within the industry.

RYAN HAGGERTY TO LEAD STATE-LEVEL LEGAL ENFORCEMENT

One of Balon's first major executive appointments was former Erie County prosecutor Ryan Haggerty as Chief State Litigator and General Counsel.

Haggerty brings more than 14 years of prosecutorial and trial experience to Buffalo Biodiesel's legal division. His role includes overseeing state court litigation, managing regulatory compliance, directing corporate

governance matters and coordinating with district attorneys throughout New York State.

According to the company, Haggerty will focus on pursuing contract breaches, addressing unlawful competitor interference and combating commercial theft affecting the waste management industry. His responsibilities also include managing internal legal strategy and strengthening compliance systems across the organization.

Balon described Haggerty's addition by stating, "Ryan's extensive courtroom experience handling high-stakes criminal conspiracies and state level litigation expands our capability to protect our assets. His addition as both our Chief State Litigator and General Counsel allows us to aggressively pursue contract breaches, hold predatory operators legally accountable, and ensure strict internal compliance. This provides vital security to our restaurant partners while countering ongoing market corruption."

Prior to joining Buffalo Biodiesel, Haggerty served as Chief of the Narcotics and Intelligence Bureau within the Erie County District Attorney's Office where he supervised major investigations and intelligence operations. Earlier assignments included service in the Homicide Bureau, Major Crimes Bureau and Special Victims Bureau. While in homicide prosecutions, he secured 23 convictions and played key roles in several high-profile criminal cases.

Following his government service, Haggerty entered private practice where he handled civil litigation involving tort claims, contract disputes and commercial matters. His academic credentials include a Juris Doctor from SUNY Buffalo Law School and the New York State Bar Association Ethics Award. His published research focused on recycling infrastructure and landfill reduction strategies.

FORMER FEDERAL PROSECUTOR JEREMIAH LENIHAN JOINS AS CHIEF FEDERAL LITIGATOR

Complementing Haggerty's state-level responsibilities is Jeremiah E. Lenihan who has been appointed Chief Federal Litigator.

The position significantly expands Buffalo Biodiesel's legal reach into the federal court system where Lenihan will focus on addressing organized theft operations, alleged monopolistic practices and tortious interference claims involving the used cooking oil marketplace.

Balon praised the appointment, stating, "Given Jerry's extensive track record in successful prosecutions at the state and federal levels, coupled with his civil practice, makes him a big help to our enforcement activities. He gives us the capability of entering the federal court system to reduce the litigation burden of the local courts by holding the controlling minds and beneficiaries of illegal business practices accountable, providing accountability and relief to restaurants being duped by these bad operators."

Lenihan brings more than 15 years of legal experience. Most recently he served as Special Counsel at Hurwitz Fine, concentrating on municipal defense matters and RICO prosecutions.

Before entering private practice, he worked as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Western District of New York prosecuting organized crime, gang activity, money laundering and financial fraud.

His résumé also includes service with the Department of Homeland Security and as a Special Deputy Attorney General in New Jersey overseeing public corruption and white-collar crime investigations. He holds degrees from Seton Hall University School of Law and Quinnipiac University and currently serves as an adjunct professor at Daemen University.

PETER GRISANTI BROUGHT IN TO STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

While Buffalo Biodiesel has heavily invested in legal leadership, the company has also



Ryan Haggerty

strengthened its financial management team through the appointment of Peter Grisanti as Chief Financial Officer.

The company characterized the hire as a major enhancement to its financial infrastructure as it pursues larger-scale industrial projects, capital developments and future expansion initiatives.

Grisanti arrives with a diverse financial background spanning healthcare, manufacturing and transportation industries. Most recently, he served as Chief Financial Officer for Pediatric and Adolescent Urgent Care of Western New York. Earlier in his career, he managed global financial reporting functions for Athenex during a period of international growth and also served as Controller and Senior Financial Analyst for The Cedar Bus Company.

A licensed Certified Public Accountant and MBA graduate of Canisius College, Grisanti brings expertise in forecasting, internal controls, capital planning and strategic financial management.

Balon emphasized the importance of the hire, stating, "Peter is another component to the rapid increase in scaling for the company and we expect further key positions to be filled in the near future."

A COMPANY PREPARING FOR ITS NEXT CHAPTER

Taken together, the appointments reflect a company aggressively positioning itself for expansion. Buffalo Biodiesel's leadership now includes experienced corporate executives, veteran state prosecutors, former federal prosecutors and seasoned financial professionals.

With a \$300 million growth partnership in place, plans to expand from 15 states to 25 states, new renewable natural gas facilities under development, and the potential creation of more than 600 new jobs, company leadership appears to be building the legal, financial and operational infrastructure necessary to support a dramatically larger enterprise.



Jeremiah E. Lenihan



Sumit Majumdar: Founder of Buffalo Biodiesel Inc., Limited Partner at Verite Capital Partners and Lead Director for Energy and Agriculture.

AROUND ERIE COUNTY

IKEA Coming to Western New York with New Walden Galleria Store *Swedish Retail Giant Set to Take Over Former Sears Space at Walden Galleria.*

Staff Reports

One of the world's most recognizable home furnishing retailers is finally making its long-awaited move into Western New York.

IKEA announced plans to open a new location inside Walden Galleria in Cheektowaga, giving local shoppers access to the popular Swedish furniture and home décor brand without having to travel hours outside the region.

The new store is expected to open early next year and will occupy a significant portion of the former Sears and Sears Auto Center space located at the north end of the mall. The addition marks one of the most significant retail developments for the shopping center in recent years and provides Walden Galleria with a major new anchor tenant at a time when malls across the country continue to face challenges from online shopping and changing consumer habits.

Mall officials hailed the project as a major victory for both the shopping center and the broader Western New York retail market.

"This addition is game-changing for the shopping center and further solidifies Walden Galleria's place as a leading destination for shopping, dining, and entertainment in Western New York," said Stephen J. Congel, Chief Executive Officer of Pyramid Management Group.

For years, IKEA fans throughout Western New York have had limited options when it came to shopping at the retailer. The nearest full-scale

U.S. location has been in Syracuse at Destiny USA, while Canadian shoppers have had access to locations in Burlington, Ontario and a pickup point in St. Catharines.

The arrival of an IKEA store in Cheektowaga is expected to draw shoppers from across Western New York, including Niagara County, Southern Ontario, the Southern Tier and surrounding regions.

"Bringing one of the world's most recognized and beloved brands to Western New York is another huge moment in our company's history," continued Congel.

The planned location will span approximately 67,000 square feet, making it similar in size to IKEA's Syracuse operation. While significantly smaller than the company's traditional warehouse-style locations, which often exceed 300,000 square feet, the new format reflects a broader strategy being pursued by the retailer nationwide.

Over the last several years, IKEA has shifted away from constructing massive destination stores and instead has focused on opening smaller, more accessible locations in key markets. The company's traditional stores can carry more than 10,000 products, while the newer formats generally feature around 3,000 items available for immediate purchase while still offering access to IKEA's full catalog.

The Walden Galleria location will occupy the lower level of the former Sears building and is expected to feature many of the same features



shoppers have come to associate with the IKEA experience.

According to mall officials, the store will include showroom displays, a marketplace featuring a wide range of furniture and home goods, and the retailer's popular Swedish Bistro. The food area is expected to serve many of IKEA's signature menu items including its famous Swedish meatballs that have become a destination staple.

For the Galleria, landing a globally recognized retailer like IKEA is viewed as a major boost at a time when shopping centers are struggling to maintain relevance. Across the country, mall operators have increasingly sought to replace traditional department stores with enter-

tainment venues, restaurants, specialty retailers and experiential attractions designed to draw customers back to brick-and-mortar shopping.

IKEA's decision to expand comes despite challenges facing the retail sector. The company has reported softer sales in recent years as consumers have grappled with inflation, higher household expenses and economic uncertainty. At the same time, retailers have faced increased costs associated with supply chain disruptions and tariffs.

Construction and preparation work are expected to move forward over the coming months with the store scheduled to welcome its first customers sometime in early 2027.

THE REALITY OF OUR SHORELINES: The Dirty Truth Behind Erie and Niagara County Beach Closures (Cont. from cover)

Sumit Majumdar
Limited Partner, Verite Capital Partners
Lead Director, Energy and Agriculture Sectors

summer, our local news is dominated by the same frustrating alerts: beach closures, toxic water warnings, and no-swim advisories.

As an executive working deeply in environmental services, industrial upcycling, and the circular economy, I view these water bans not just as a ruined weekend at the beach, but as a glaring symptom of infrastructure failure and resource mismanagement. We are letting organic waste, agricultural runoff, and raw sewage dictate our access to nature. It is an economic and public health crisis hiding in plain sight.

To understand the scale of the problem, we first have to look at the metrics that dictate when a beach is forced to close and the invisible toll it takes on our local economy.

The Culprit — E. Coli and Fecal Indicator Bacteria

When a beach in Erie or Niagara County closes after a heavy rainstorm, the immediate culprit is almost always *Escherichia coli* (E. coli). E. coli itself is a bacteria found in the gastrointestinal tracts of warm-blooded animals, including humans. While most strains are harmless, environmental regulators use it as a "Fecal Indicator Bacteria" (FIB).

If E. coli is present in the water, it means raw sewage or animal waste is also present. And where there is feces, there are highly dangerous pathogens that cause severe gastrointestinal illness, ear infections, skin rashes, and respiratory issues.

The state standard requires a beach to close if a single water sample exceeds 235 colonies per 100 milliliters of water. Unfortunately, traditional testing takes 18 to 24 hours to cultivate in a lab. By the time the results are posted, the public may have already been swimming in contaminated water the day before.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and Cyanobacteria

While E. coli is tied to rainfall and sewage, Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) are driven by heat and agricultural fertilizer. When heavy spring rains wash phosphorus and nitrogen from farm fields into the lake basin, it creates a massive nutrient load. As the summer heat warms the shallow waters of Lake Erie, these nutrients supercharge the growth of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae).

These blooms look like spilled green paint or thick pea soup on the water's surface. Unlike standard algae, cyanobacteria produce deadly toxins, most notably microcystin. These toxins are robust; boiling the water does not destroy them, and standard water treatment plants have to deploy activated carbon and specialized filtration to keep our municipal drinking water safe.

Erie County Beach Ban Records (2021-2025)

In Erie County, beaches at the convergence points of the lake and near urban centers suffer the most. An analysis of the last five years shows a distinct pattern: natural beaches like Evangola State Park fare better due to lake currents, while areas like Woodlawn Beach and Hamburg Beach face frequent, sometimes chronic, closures due to their proximity to stormwater outfalls and prevailing wind patterns that trap contaminants against the shore.

Many of these closures are proactive. For example, some beaches mandate an automatic 24-hour closure anytime rainfall exceeds half an inch, simply because the infrastructure is guaranteed to overflow.

Niagara County Beach Ban Records (2021-2025)

Niagara County faces a slightly different set of challenges along the shores of Lake Ontario. Beaches like Olcott Beach and Krull Park undergo rigorous weekly testing at both shallow and deep depths throughout the summer.

Here, the water quality is frequently compromised not just by human infrastructure, but by environmental factors like overpopulating shorebirds contributing to localized bacterial spikes. Floating debris, bad odors, and excessive weed growth also factor heavily into Niagara County's decisions to post "Unsafe to Swim" notices.

The Devastating Impact on Aquatic Life

When we talk about water pollution, human recreation is only half the story. The impact on aquatic ecosystems is catastrophic. When excess phosphorus triggers massive algal blooms, the real danger happens when that algae dies.

As the algae sinks and decomposes, the bacterial decay process consumes the dissolved oxygen in the water. This creates "hypoxic zones" or "dead zones" where the oxygen levels are too low to support marine life. Fish that cannot swim away fast enough simply suffocate. Furthermore, the thick mats of algae block sunlight from reaching beneficial submerged plants, collapsing the foundation of the local food web.

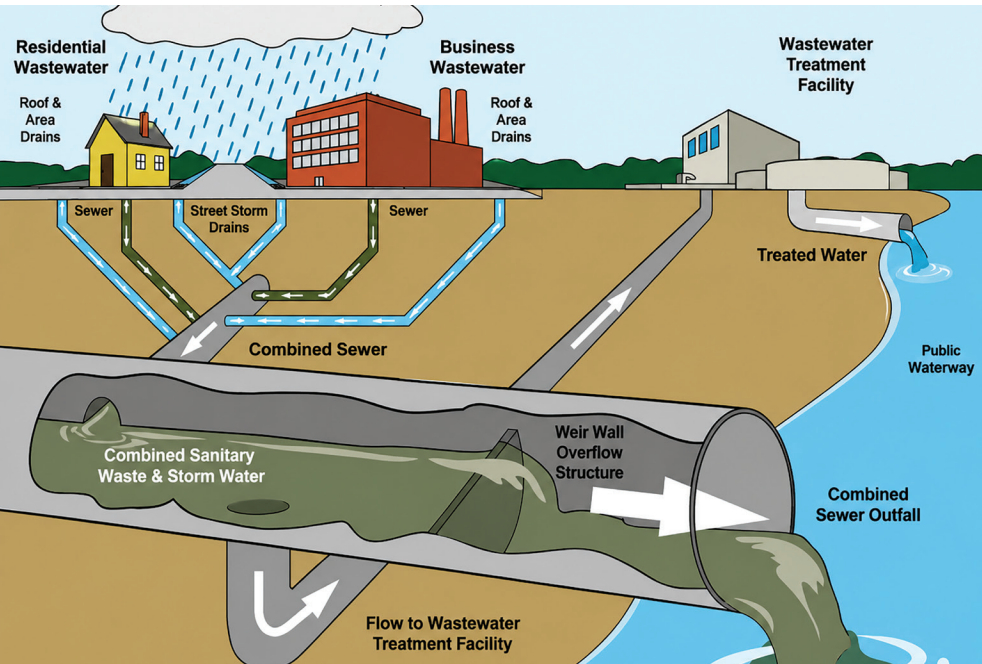
The Lethal Danger to Our Dogs

This is an issue that hits particularly close to home. When I take my dog, Loki, anywhere near the water during the summer, I am hyper-vigilant. Dogs are disproportionately vulnerable to cyanobacteria toxicosis.

A human might accidentally swallow a mouthful of lake water, but dogs actively drink from the shore. They retrieve tennis balls soaked in algae, and worst of all, they lick their fur clean after getting out of the water, directly ingesting concentrated cyanotoxins.

Dogs are highly susceptible to algae toxins because they ingest water and lick their fur.

There is no antidote for blue-green algae poisoning in dogs. If a dog ingests the neurotoxins produced by these blooms, it can be fatal in a matter of minutes to hours. Liver toxins (hepatotoxins) may take a few hours to show



symptoms, but they are equally devastating, causing severe internal bleeding and organ failure. If you see green scum, keep your dog away entirely.

Where the Contamination Comes From

How does all this bacteria and fertilizer get into our lakes? The answer lies in our aging infrastructure. Much of our region relies on Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).

In a modern system, sanitary sewage from homes and industrial facilities flows in separate pipes from rainwater. But in older cities, storm drains and sewage share the same pipe. During a dry week, all of it goes to the wastewater treatment plant. But when we get a heavy summer downpour, the sheer volume of rainwater overwhelms the system. To prevent sewage from backing up into people's basements, the system is designed with relief valves that dump the excess—a mix of rainwater and raw, untreated human sewage—directly into our rivers and lakes.

Agricultural runoff is the second massive contributor. Traditional farming involves broadcast phosphorus fertilizer over the top of the soil. When it rains before the plants can absorb it, that phosphorus washes straight into the watershed, acting as an all-you-can-eat buffet for cyanobacteria.

Solutions and How Other Regions Fix It

This is not an unsolvable problem. Other municipalities around the Great Lakes are successfully managing this crisis by updating their infrastructure and leveraging advanced testing.

We need to embrace predictive modeling. Programs like the USGS "NowCast" use localized weather, wave, and wind data to predict E. coli levels in under an hour, rather than waiting 24 hours for a lab culture. This keeps people out of the water before they get sick.

On the infrastructure side, cities are investing in deep storage tunnels to hold stormwater until the treatment plants can catch up. Agricultural areas are shifting to "soil injection" for phosphorus, placing the fertilizer deep into the dirt where rain cannot wash it away, rather than scattering it on the surface.

A Circular Economy Approach & Conclusion

Fixing this requires shifting our mindset from "waste disposal" to a circular economy. When we view grease trap waste, agricultural byproducts, and organic sludge merely as trash, they end up in our waterways.

In my work, I focus heavily on utilizing these exact organic streams to produce Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) and employing advanced materials like biochar. By intercepting commercial organic waste before it stresses municipal pipelines, we reduce the burden on our water treatment plants. Furthermore, when we apply biochar to agricultural lands, it stabilizes the soil, traps phosphorus, and prevents it from ever reaching Lake Erie. We must also evaluate our infrastructure improvements using strict, short-term climate metrics like the 20-year Global Warming Potential (GWP20) standard to ensure our solutions are actually reducing our immediate environmental footprint.

We cannot accept closed beaches and toxic water as just "part of summer." We must demand better infrastructure, innovate our waste management, and respect the water.

ROCHESTER

Rochester International Jazz Festival Set to Bring More Than 300 Concerts and 110 Free Events to Downtown Rochester

John Watson

One of New York's largest music events is preparing to return to downtown Rochester as the 23rd annual Rochester Regional Health Rochester International Jazz Festival presented by M&T Bank gets ready to welcome hundreds of performers and tens of thousands of music fans from June 19th through June 27th.

Festival organizers announced that this year's event will feature more than 300 concerts across 19 indoor and outdoor venues throughout the city. Of those performances, more than 110 shows, workshops and special events will be offered free of charge, continuing one of the festival's longstanding traditions of providing broad public access to world-class music.

The Rochester International Jazz Festival has grown into one of the largest jazz festivals in the United States and the largest in New York State. Since its founding in 2002, annual attendance has expanded from approximately 15,000 visitors to more than 210,000, generating an estimated \$220 million in regional economic impact while transforming downtown Rochester into a nine-day destination for music lovers.

Festival Producer and Executive Director Marc Iacona said the extensive lineup of free programming remains one of the defining characteristics of the event.

"One of the things that makes this festival special is that so much of it is free and open to everyone," said Iacona. "With more than 100 free concerts and events, we're able to bring world-class music directly to the community and create unforgettable experiences for both longtime fans and first-time visitors. These performances help create a cultural experience that is second to none, one that transforms our city into a vibrant gathering place where music, creativity, and community come together. We are deeply grateful to our sponsors and

community partners whose support makes this commitment possible and helps ensure that great music remains accessible to all."

Among the largest attractions this year will be a series of free headliner performances taking place on the festival's outdoor stages.

The East & Chestnut Stage and the Wegmans Stage at Parcel 5 will host nationally recognized performers throughout the festival. Scheduled appearances include the Robert Cray Band on June 20th, Tito Puente Jr. and Nestor Torres on June 24th, Galactic on June 25th, Ana Popovic on June 26th and Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue on June 27th.

Opening acts for those performances are scheduled to begin at 7pm with headliner sets beginning at 9pm. Organizers are encouraging attendees to arrive early due to expected large crowds.

In addition to the major headliner performances, festival patrons will have access to free entertainment on eight different stages and venues throughout downtown Rochester.

The Wegmans Stage at Parcel 5 will feature two free outdoor performances each evening beginning at 7pm and 9pm from June 24th through June 27th. Festival attendees are permitted to bring low-profile lawn chairs. Food and drinks will be available for purchase onsite.

The East & Chestnut Stage, presented by the City of Rochester, will host two free performances on June 20th at 7pm and 9pm. The stage will be located on Chestnut Street and also permits low-profile seating.

One of the busiest areas of the festival will once again be the City of Rochester Jazz Street Stage presented by the Community Foundation. Organizers expect more than 50 performances to take place there throughout the festival with music running daily from approximately 3:45pm through 10:30pm.

The Wegmans Pavilion at Rochester Regional Health Rhythm Square will present 36 performances during the event. Three shows

will take place daily beginning at 6pm, 7:45pm and 9:30pm. The pavilion offers tented seating along with food and beverage options.

Additional free programming will include the popular Jazz Starts at the Library series held at the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County. Those performances will take place from noon until 1pm each weekday from June 22nd through June 26th, weather permitting.

For aspiring musicians and music students, the festival will again offer free Jazz Workshops at the Eastman School of Music's Ray Wright Room. Workshops will be held daily from 1pm to 2:30pm between June 22nd and June 26th and are designed to help students of all ages learn improvisation techniques directly from musicians performing at the festival.

Nightly jam sessions are also returning to the Hyatt Regency Rochester. Hosted inside The Street Craft Kitchen & Bar on the lobby level, the sessions will run every night from June 19th through June 27th beginning at 10:30pm. Admission is free.

A major focus of this year's festival remains showcasing Rochester's own music community.

Organizers announced that more than 80 performing groups from the Rochester region will appear throughout the nine-day event. Those artists will perform at venues including Hatch Hall, the Inn on Broadway, Temple Theater, the Jazz Street Stage, Wegmans Pavilion, Parcel 5 and the Central Library.

Local musicians will also participate in educational workshops and late-night jam sessions.

Festival officials say their commitment to Rochester artists remains a cornerstone of the event's mission.

"Supporting local artists has always been at the heart of this festival," said Iacona. "From emerging talent to internationally recognized musicians who got their start here, we're committed to giving Rochester artists a stage to be

heard, celebrated, and connected to audiences at home and beyond."

The festival's relationship with the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music also remains a key component of the programming. Through a partnership that has now lasted a quarter-century, students, alumni and faculty members from the internationally recognized music school will perform throughout the festival.

Patrons who purchased Club Pass tickets online must exchange those tickets for official passes and lanyards before attending performances. The Ticket Shop will operate from noon to 5pm between June 15th and June 19th and from noon to 9pm throughout the duration of the festival.

Headliner tickets and one-day, three-day and nine-day Club Passes remain available for purchase.

This year's premium headliner lineup includes Grammy Award-winning trumpeter Chris Botti on June 25th, legendary vocalist Gladys Knight on June 26th and the iconic Count Basie Orchestra on June 27th. Those performances will take place at Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre beginning at 8pm.

Festival organizers say the combination of internationally recognized performers, emerging artists, educational opportunities and extensive free programming continues to make the Rochester International Jazz Festival one of the premier music events in North America.

Over the course of nine days, more than 1,750 artists from around the world will perform throughout downtown Rochester, turning the city into a walkable music destination filled with jazz, blues, world music and a wide variety of creative musical styles.

For residents and visitors, the festival once again promises nearly nonstop live music, dozens of free performances and an opportunity to experience one of the region's largest annual cultural events.

Rochester Woman Found Dead Near Erie Canal Identified as Police Await Autopsy Results

John Watson

Authorities have identified the woman whose body was discovered near the Erie Canal in Gates earlier this month as investigators continue working to determine exactly how she died and how she ended up in the location where she was found.

The Gates Police Department confirmed that the victim was 32-year-old Marie Fountain-Williams of Rochester. Her body was located during the evening hours of June 2nd after people using the Erie Canal path noticed something unusual near a wooded area off Lee Road.

According to Gates Police Chief Robert Long, the discovery was made by members of the public who were walking along the canal path and decided to investigate after observing what appeared to be something out of the ordinary.

"What had happened was there were people using the canal path that noticed something strange, went over to investigate, and unfortunately found a deceased female," said Chief Long.

Police responded to the scene around 7:30pm and quickly secured the area as investigators began examining the circumstances surrounding the woman's death.

Chief Long said Fountain-Williams was not found directly on the canal path itself but rather in an area just beyond it.

"She was tucked in along the wood line, but out in the grassy area," said Long.

The location where her body was discovered immediately raised questions for investigators, particularly regarding how she arrived there and whether anyone else may have been involved. As detectives processed the scene, officials noted that there were no obvious signs of violence visible on the victim.

"There was nothing that stood out as far

as a stab wound or a bullet wound or anything that would bring you right to the level that, 'Hey, this is a homicide that you're investigating,'" Long explained.

That absence of immediately visible trauma has complicated the investigation and increased the importance of forensic testing being conducted by the Monroe County Medical Examiner's Office.

Police said they are still waiting for the medical examiner to determine the official cause of death. Those findings are expected to play a critical role in helping investigators understand what happened during Fountain-Williams' final hours and are expected in the coming week(s).

Long acknowledged that determining the cause of death can become more difficult when a body has been exposed to outdoor conditions.

"Unfortunately, there's some factors playing into that, like when you're outside, some things start to process faster, some things slow down," he said.

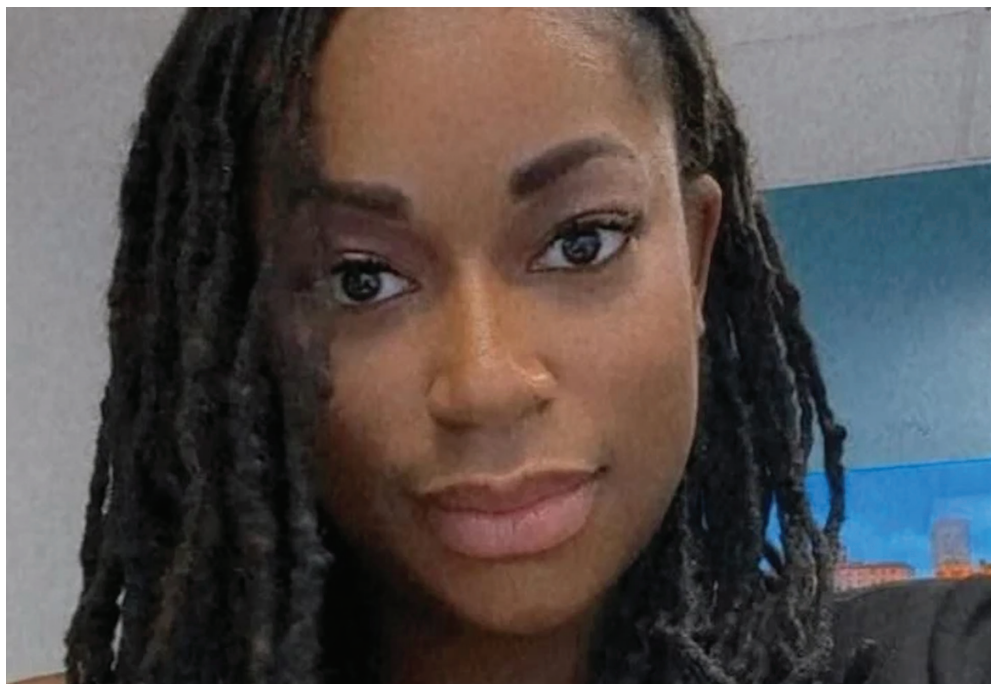
While investigators continue waiting for autopsy results, police do not believe Fountain-Williams had been at the location for an extended period of time before she was discovered.

"But, we don't believe she was there very long," Long continued.

One of the biggest unanswered questions remains how Fountain-Williams arrived near the canal path. Detectives have spent days gathering surveillance footage from nearby businesses and other locations in an effort to retrace her movements.

Police say investigators are reviewing large amounts of video evidence in hopes of identifying anything suspicious that could help explain how she ended up in the area.

"We're pulling as much video as we can from local businesses and we have investigators reviewing it just to try and figure out what was going on," said Long. "There



is some in that area, and it's just hours of video to review to try and figure out what is suspicious and what is not."

Authorities have not publicly disclosed whether any vehicles, persons of interest, or other evidence have emerged from that review process.

Investigators also revealed that Fountain-Williams had not been reported missing prior to the discovery of her body. That fact has added another layer of mystery to the case as detectives work to piece together a timeline of her final days.

After positively identifying the victim, police notified her family.

"The investigators notified the family," he said. "They're doing as they would be, finding out that a loved one passed away. Obviously it's tragic, especially at that age,

younger, still has a whole long life to live."

The death has left family members searching for answers while police continue their investigation into what led to the Rochester woman's death.

At this point, authorities have not ruled the case a homicide, accidental death, or death from natural causes. Investigators say they are keeping an open mind while awaiting the results of forensic testing and continuing to analyze evidence collected from the scene.

Police have not announced any arrests or identified any suspects.

An investigation remains ongoing.

Anyone with information is asked to call Gates Police at (585) 247-2262 or email tips@townofgatesny.gov.



STATE NEWS

Hochul Signs Law Requiring GPS Speed Limiters in Some Vehicles, Critics Blast Latest Albany Mandate

Staff Reports

Albany is about to get a lot more involved in what happens behind the wheel of your car.

Governor Kathy Hochul has signed legislation requiring certain repeat traffic offenders to install GPS-connected speed-limiting devices in their vehicles, a move democrats call a public safety measure but critics say represents yet another example of New York government expanding its reach into the daily lives of residents.

The new law, part of what Hochul has branded a "Super Speeder Crackdown," requires drivers who rack up 16 or more speed-camera or red-light-camera violations within a 12-month period to install Intelligent Speed Limiter technology in their vehicles.

The system is designed to physically prevent drivers from exceeding posted speed limits. The technology connects to a vehicle's onboard computer and uses GPS data to determine local speed limits, automatically restricting how fast the vehicle can travel.

Drivers who refuse to install the equipment face losing their vehicle registration after 45 days.

"We have to protect people and if someone is so flagrantly violating the laws that there's a callous disregard of human life-

that's the only way I can describe it-there have to be consequences have to be," said Hochul.

The governor offered an even sharper warning to drivers who fail to comply with the mandate.

"If you don't install it after 45 days, you lose your registration," said Hochul. "You should not be on the roads if you don't care about whether or not you're going to kill somebody."

Hochul and other democrats say the legislation targets only the worst repeat offenders and could prevent serious crashes involving drivers who repeatedly ignore traffic laws.

But the proposal immediately triggered criticism from New Yorkers who see the measure as a troubling expansion of government oversight.

The backlash has been particularly fierce online where critics questioned whether state government should have the authority to require GPS-based technology inside privately owned vehicles.

Some opponents argued that drivers who repeatedly break traffic laws should simply lose their licenses rather than have government-mandated technology installed in their cars.

Others warned that today's threshold of 16 violations could eventually become 10, five or even fewer as lawmakers continue expanding automated enforcement systems

throughout the state.

The debate comes as New York continues adding speed cameras, red-light cameras and automated enforcement programs in communities across the state.

Critics argue the new law represents the next step in that progression, moving beyond issuing citations and into physically controlling how a vehicle operates.

Many also pointed to broader frustrations with state government.

Some questioned why Albany appears eager to regulate vehicle speeds while affordability concerns, housing costs, taxes, utility bills and public safety remain top concerns for many residents.

One criticism repeated frequently online was that lawmakers appear more interested in controlling behavior than addressing the economic challenges driving people out of New York.

Others raised concerns about privacy and surveillance.

Although the state says the technology is intended only to limit vehicle speed, opponents worry the requirement could create a precedent for future tracking or monitoring programs tied to driving behavior.

The concerns are not entirely new.

Across the country, similar debates have emerged wherever lawmakers have proposed speed-limiting technology.

New York now joins Washington State,

Virginia and Washington, D.C., in adopting similar legislation.

The law also arrives during a year in which Hochul has embraced a number of progressive policy initiatives that have generated controversy among both Republicans, Independents and some moderate Democrats.

Recent debates over immigration policies, data center development, energy regulations and other government mandates have fueled criticism that Albany continues moving toward more centralized control over issues traditionally left to local governments or individual choice.

Supporters reject that characterization and argue the state has a responsibility to address dangerous driving behavior before it results in fatalities.

State officials note that the legislation specifically targets drivers with lengthy records of violations and is not intended for ordinary motorists.

The legislation is expected to take effect in the coming months, with state agencies responsible for developing implementation procedures and enforcement guidelines.

For now, the debate is likely far from over.

And for drivers across New York, it serves as a reminder that Albany's reach now extends all the way to your gas pedal.

Rate Hikes Now in Effect for RG&E and NYSEG Customers as Utility Bills Climb (Cont. from cover)

Staff Reports

The increases are significantly lower than the amounts originally requested by the utility companies during ongoing rate proceedings before state regulators. The Public Service Commission said affordability concerns played a major role in its decision to approve only temporary and reduced increases while a final determination is made.

According to the commission, the temporary rates are intended to strike a balance between shielding customers from larger immediate increases while still providing utilities with additional revenue needed to continue infrastructure improvements, reliability projects and system maintenance.

State regulators also said the temporary approach allows more time to fully review the utilities' long-term rate requests before permanent rates are established later this year.

"Governor Hochul is demanding strict fiscal discipline from the utilities and has directed the Department of Public Service to prioritize affordability for ratepayers while scrutinizing any rate increase proposals to ensure the lights and heat stay on," said PSC Chair Rory Christian in a statement.

Christian said the commission believes temporary rates provide the best available solution while the broader rate cases continue to be reviewed.

"The Commission's authority to establish temporary rates during the course of a rate proceeding for electric and gas utilities is well-founded. We have determined that a temporary rate, in the context of these major rate proceedings, is the best tool available to provide the additional time necessary to thoroughly review the proposals and make our final determination to establish just and reasonable rates," he continued.

The rate increases come as many New Yorkers continue to express frustration over utility costs that have climbed steadily in recent years. Consumer advocates have repeatedly argued that energy affordability remains a growing concern for families already facing higher costs for housing, groceries, insurance and gas.

RG&E and NYSEG parent company Avangrid defended the need for continued

investment in the utility system, arguing that infrastructure upgrades are necessary to maintain reliability and prepare for future energy demands.

In a statement, the company said it understands "how important it is to keep energy bills affordable while continuing to invest in a safe, reliable, and resilient energy system."

The company stated that sustained investment in electric and gas infrastructure helps control future costs while supporting long-term system reliability as communities continue to grow.

Avangrid also reiterated its opposition to proposals that would place electric systems under government ownership, arguing that public acquisition of utility infrastructure would ultimately cost taxpayers billions of dollars while delaying critical upgrades.

"Our position on government-controlled power remains unchanged. It would be the wrong move for Rochester, is not in the best interest of utility customers, and would not improve service," the company stated.

Avangrid further argued that transferring utility systems to public ownership would require taxpayers to fund the purchase of existing infrastructure and could slow modernization efforts.

"Such an approach would place the burden on taxpayers to fund the billions of dollars required to acquire existing infrastructure—ultimately driving up costs, delaying critical grid improvements, and hindering progress toward a cleaner energy future," the statement continued.

The company concluded by saying it remains focused on investing in local communities, improving customer service and modernizing the electric and natural gas systems that serve customers throughout the region.

"RG&E remains focused on what matters most: investing in the communities we serve, enhancing the customer experience, and modernizing our energy infrastructure. We are committed to delivering the safe, reliable electric and natural gas service our customers expect and deserve."

Permanent rates for both utilities are expected to be determined by state regulators in the coming months following additional review and negotiations in the ongoing rate cases.

New York Power Grid Faces Growing Strain as Aging Plants Retire, Data Center Demand Surges and Extreme Weather Threatens Reliability

Staff Reports

New York's electric grid is entering what energy officials describe as one of the most challenging periods in its history, with aging power plants, rising electricity demand, increasingly severe weather and a growing wave of proposed data centers all placing new pressure on the state's energy system.

The warning comes from the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO), which released its annual Power Trends 2026 report outlining mounting concerns about the future reliability of the state's electric grid.

According to the report, New York has permanently lost approximately 1.5 gigawatts of power generation capacity since 2019 as older fossil fuel facilities have retired or been taken offline. At the same time, replacement energy sources have not been developed quickly enough to offset those losses, creating concerns about whether sufficient electricity will be available during periods of peak demand.

NYISO officials warned that reserve margins continue to shrink, leaving less room for error during extreme weather events and increasing the likelihood of localized reliability issues if additional generation is not brought online.

NYISO President and Chief Executive Officer Rich Dewey said New York is approaching a critical crossroads in its energy future.

"An all-of-the-above approach to investment, supported by effective competitive electric markets, is needed now to maintain system reliability and support the state's economic and environmental goals," said Dewey.

The report identifies winter reliability as an emerging concern that rivals traditional summertime peak demand. Long periods of severe cold experienced since 2023 have repeatedly pushed the system close to its limits, requiring emergency actions by grid operators to maintain reliability.

NYISO noted that increased electrification of homes and buildings is placing additional stress on the system during winter months. The report also warns that natural gas infrastructure can experience operational challenges during prolonged freezing conditions.

As a result, the grid operator concluded that "winter conditions are emerging as one of the

most significant reliability challenges facing New York's electric system."

Beyond weather concerns, officials highlighted the state's growing dependence on power plants that are more than five decades old. Those facilities are increasingly vulnerable to unexpected breakdowns and equipment failures, reducing overall system flexibility during high-demand periods.

The report warns that transmission constraints and generation shortages could contribute to localized reliability problems and potential blackouts in some areas as early as next summer if conditions align unfavorably.

Meanwhile, a new source of electricity demand is rapidly emerging across New York.

As of May, NYISO reported that 51 proposed projects seeking grid connections were under review. Those projects include artificial intelligence data centers, semiconductor manufacturing facilities and other large industrial developments requiring enormous amounts of electricity around the clock.

Collectively, those proposals represent more than 12,600 megawatts of potential new demand. While NYISO projects that only a fraction of that total – approximately 2,880 megawatts – will ultimately materialize by 2040, officials acknowledge that the scale of proposed growth is unprecedented.

The growing interest in data center development has become a major issue in Albany where lawmakers have spent months debating whether such facilities could overwhelm portions of the electric grid and drive utility bills even higher for residents.

Those concerns recently led the assembly and senate to pass legislation establishing a one-year moratorium on permits for new large-scale data centers while regulators study their impact on electricity demand, infrastructure and consumer costs. The measure still requires approval from Governor Kathy Hochul before becoming law.

As lawmakers, regulators and energy providers continue debating New York's future energy strategy, NYISO's latest report makes one point clear: demand for electricity is growing, reliable generation capacity is shrinking, and the state's ability to balance affordability, reliability and climate goals will likely shape New York's energy future for decades to come.

NATIONAL NEWS

U.S., Iran Reach Agreement to End War as Leaders Prepare to Reopen Strait of Hormuz

Deal Could Bring End to Months of Fighting, Ease Global Energy Crisis and Launch New Round of High-Stakes Negotiations.

Staff Reports

After more than three months of conflict that rattled global markets, disrupted energy supplies and pushed the Middle East to the brink of a wider regional war, the United States and Iran have announced a breakthrough agreement aimed at ending hostilities and reopening one of the world's most critical shipping routes.

President Donald Trump and Iranian officials confirmed over the weekend that negotiators had reached an agreement intended to halt the conflict that erupted in late February and restore access through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway responsible for carrying roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

The agreement is expected to be formally signed Friday, 19th during a ceremony in Switzerland.

"The Deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete. Congratulations to all!" Trump wrote on social media Sunday evening.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council also confirmed the agreement, describing it as the result of months of difficult diplomacy.

The council said the deal was reached "following a difficult and intensive period of negotiations lasting several months."

The announcement immediately sent shockwaves through energy markets and diplomatic circles around the world as governments and businesses reacted to the possibility that one of the most disruptive conflicts in recent Middle Eastern history may finally be winding down.

While significant issues remain unresolved, both sides are presenting the agreement as a major step toward ending a war that has claimed thousands of lives, disrupted international trade routes and contributed to surging energy prices across the globe.

Under the agreement, the United States and Iran will extend their current ceasefire for an additional 60 days while negotiators attempt to hammer out a permanent settlement.

If implemented successfully, the deal is expected to halt remaining military exchanges between the two countries, reopen the Strait of Hormuz, ease pressure on global oil supplies and potentially bring an end to ongoing fighting involving Iranian-backed groups throughout the region.

Trump celebrated the planned reopening of the strategic waterway.

"Ships of the World, start your engines. Let the oil flow!" he wrote.

In a separate post, Trump said the Strait of Hormuz would officially reopen following the signing ceremony.

"Upon the signing of the Deal on Friday, for purposes of mine removal," Trump wrote.

The Strait of Hormuz has been at the center of the conflict since shortly after the war began on February 28th.

Iran effectively gained control over shipping traffic moving through the waterway during the conflict, restricting and essentially halting the movement of oil tankers and liquefied natural gas shipments. The United States responded by blockading Iranian ports, creating a standoff that disrupted energy markets and contributed to one of the largest oil supply shocks in modern history.

American officials have alleged that Iran deployed mines within portions of the strait, complicating efforts to restore commercial traffic.

The closure sent oil prices soaring and became one of the most significant economic consequences of the conflict.

At one point, Brent crude climbed above \$126 per barrel as markets feared a prolonged disruption in global energy supplies.

The announcement of a deal immediately reversed much of that surge.

Oil prices dropped sharply on Monday, June 15th after markets reopened following the weekend. Futures fell approximately 4 percent overnight and have now declined nearly 13 percent from last week's peak.

Brent crude traded around \$83 per barrel Monday, while West Texas Intermediate hovered near \$80.

Though prices remain elevated compared to pre-war levels, analysts say the agreement has significantly reduced fears of a prolonged supply crisis.

Lower oil prices could eventually provide relief to consumers who have been grappling with rising gasoline prices and inflationary pressures linked to the conflict.

Throughout the war, average gasoline prices in the United States rose by as much as \$1.50 per gallon before easing in recent weeks as expectations of a diplomatic breakthrough grew.

Despite the optimism, major questions remain unanswered.

Perhaps the most significant unresolved issue is Iran's nuclear program.

Trump originally cited concerns about Iran's nuclear activities when launching military operations earlier this year. Yet the newly announced agreement does not settle the future of Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

According to officials familiar with negotiations, the nuclear issue will be addressed during the next 60 days of talks.

In an interview with The New York Times, Trump suggested Iran could be permitted to maintain limited nuclear enrichment capabilities.

That position marks a notable shift from previous demands that Iran completely dismantle its nuclear program.

Iran is also seeking the release of billions of dollars in frozen assets and the lifting of U.S. and international sanctions that have crippled parts of its economy.

Those issues are expected to become central points of contention in the next phase of negotiations.

Trump acknowledged that failure to reach a permanent agreement could result in renewed conflict.

According to comments reported by The New York Times, the president suggested he could relaunch military operations if negotiations collapse or potentially seek a broader regional arrangement under which the United States would become "the guardian of the Middle East" in exchange for a share of regional revenues.

Diplomatic efforts leading to the agreement involved several countries.

Pakistan emerged as one of the key mediators between Washington and Tehran with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif playing a prominent role throughout negotiations.

Sharif confirmed that an official signing ceremony is planned for Friday in Switzerland.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told Iranian state media that Tehran views the agreement as a major diplomatic victory.

The conflict's regional dimensions remain complex.



One of Iran's major conditions for reaching an agreement reportedly involved efforts to reduce hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Despite those expectations, fighting has continued.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz stated Monday that Israeli forces would remain in southern Lebanon indefinitely.

Israel and Hezbollah have exchanged attacks almost daily despite an official ceasefire.

On Sunday, June 14th Hezbollah launched drones into northern Israel, according to Israeli military officials.

Israel responded with a deadly airstrike targeting a Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Trump publicly criticized the timing of the Israeli operation.

"This morning's attack on Beirut should not have happened, particularly on a special day when we are so close to a peace deal with Iran," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The comments highlighted ongoing tensions between Washington and Jerusalem over how to approach the broader regional conflict.

Although Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remain in frequent contact, reports indicate the two leaders have disagreed on several aspects of the war and the diplomatic process.

Israel was not directly involved in the negotiations that produced the current agreement.

International reaction to the deal has been overwhelmingly positive.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani praised the breakthrough and thanked Pakistan for its role in helping bring the parties together.

He called for "positive and constructive" negotiations during the next phase of talks.

European leaders from Britain, France, Germany and Italy also welcomed the agreement and urged all sides to move quickly toward implementation.

The leaders stressed the importance of reopening the Strait of Hormuz and reiterated support for stability throughout Lebanon and the wider Middle East.

French President Emmanuel Macron said upcoming discussions among G7 leaders would focus heavily on the diplomatic opportunities created by the agreement and the long-term future of regional security.

The United Nations likewise welcomed the announcement.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres described the agreement as a major step toward reducing tensions.

His spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the deal represented a "critical step" and expressed hope that all parties would build upon the momentum and "redouble their efforts towards a final resolution of the conflict."

Energy analysts say markets appear more optimistic about this agreement than previous ceasefire announcements.

Throughout the conflict, numerous reports of impending deals briefly pushed oil prices lower before negotiations collapsed.

This time, however, the combination of public confirmation from Washington, Tehran and Islamabad has increased confidence that a genuine breakthrough may have occurred.

Claudio Galimberti, chief economist at Rystad Energy, said the interests of all parties appear unusually aligned.

"Washington has an incentive to avoid a spike in gasoline prices ahead of the midterms, while Tehran is seeking sanctions relief and restored export revenues, and the global economy has a strong interest in keeping the Strait of Hormuz open," Galimberti wrote.

"On rare occasions, these incentives align in a coherent way, and that is the strongest argument that this is more than another short-lived diplomatic cycle," he added.

Still, experts caution that even a successful agreement will not instantly restore global energy markets to pre-war conditions.

Kevin Book, managing director at ClearView Energy Partners, said damaged infrastructure, interrupted production and depleted inventories will take time to recover.

"It could be months before things return to something like the way things were before the war, at least as far as flows out of the Strait of Hormuz go," said Book.

"The facilities that have been shut down, some of them can start fairly quickly. Others may take months," he added.

Even after shipping lanes reopen, tankers must reposition, energy companies must restart facilities and countries will likely spend months rebuilding strategic stockpiles depleted during the conflict.

For now, however, world leaders, investors and energy markets are cautiously celebrating what many hope will be the beginning of the end of a war that reshaped global politics, disrupted international commerce and pushed the world's energy system to the edge.

Whether the agreement ultimately leads to a lasting peace or simply a temporary pause in hostilities depends on what happens during the next 60 days of negotiations.



CRIME BLOTTER

CRIME REPORTS PUBLISHED BY NIAGARA ACTION OVER THE LAST WEEK

-Seconds from Disaster: Woman Hangs Over Niagara Falls as Officers Race to Save Her. Law enforcement received a call around 11:30pm on June 8th after reports of a mental health emergency at Terrapin Point on Goat Island inside the Niagara Falls State Park. Dispatch advised responding officers that a woman reportedly jumped over the fence and was standing on the edge of the Horseshoe Falls. According to the caller, she was hanging over the edge of the falls as if she was going to jump. Police responded to the scene extremely quickly from inside the state park and were able to prevent what could have been a tragedy. It is unknown if the female was arrested for crossing over the barrier or taken for mental health treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara County Man Survives Self-inflicted Gunshot Wound to the Chest. Law enforcement received a call around 10:14am on June 9th after reports of a medical emergency on Ewings Road in Niagara County. The 911 caller told police that an adult male shot himself in the chest with a handgun. Family members were able to secure the weapon and, while on the phone with police, working to control bleeding. Fortunately, he remained conscious throughout but there was a concern that he pierced his lung with the shot. Police and medical responded to the scene. The male was having trouble breathing when they arrived. He was transported to a hospital for emergency treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-'He killed my dog!' — Woman Says Niagara Falls Man Killed Her Dog in Front Yard. Law enforcement received a call around 5:54pm on June 10th after reports of an animal being harmed on the 1200 block of Ontario Avenue in Niagara Falls. The female 911 caller told police that a man killed her dog. According to dispatch, the woman was hysterical on the phone. The incident took place in the 911 caller's, or nearby, yard. It was unclear from the 911 call whether or not the suspect used any weapons to kill the dog or if he only used his hands to suffocate or snap its neck. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male remained at the location or was located and taken into custody. No further information is available at this time.

-Police Find Man Lying Near Bicycle with Pants Down in North Tonawanda Park. Law enforcement received a call around 5:51pm on June 10th after reports of indecent exposure at Gateway Park in North Tonawanda. The female 911 caller told police that a male was lying near his bicycle with his pants down. He was described as white, but no other details were given. Police did not say if he was homeless. Police responded to the scene to check the welfare. It is unknown if the male was taken for mental health treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Police Called After 10-person Brawl Erupts Inside Niagara County Applebee's. Early Morning Brawl at Applebee's Law enforcement received a call around 1:45am on June 11th after reports of an assault at Applebee's on South Transit Road in Lockport. The 911 caller told police that 10 or more people were fighting inside the restaurant. The primary aggressor was described as a "male in a red hat." The altercation was verbal in addition to physical involving punches thrown. Unknown injuries, if any. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if any arrests were made. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Woman Locked Out of Apartment as Her Sister is Beaten, Screams for Help Inside. Law enforcement received a call around 10:32am on June 12th after reports of a violent domestic incident at Packard Court in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a third party and sister of the victim, told police that a man was beating her sister who was heard screaming for help in her apartment. The caller reported to police that she was unable to get into the apartment because the door was locked. The victim was screaming for someone to help her while the sister was on with dispatch. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male was arrested. No further information is available at this time.

-Male Throws Lit Cigarette at 2-year-old's Face Causing Serious Injury in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 6:11pm on June 12th after reports of an assault at a playground on Niagara Street in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller and mother of the victim told police that a male threw a lit cigarette at her 2-year-old child's face. The cigarette's ember exploded upon hitting the child's face causing a burn. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the police were able to locate the suspect and arrest him. No further information is available at this time.

-Niagara Falls Gang Assault Targets Defenseless Girl on a Bicycle. Law enforcement received a call around 7:23pm on June 12th after reports of a gang assault in the area of Hyde Park Blvd. and Weston Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller, a third party driving by, told police that there was a group of males next to a red Escalade "beating up on a female." The female was defenseless. She was repeatedly being punched and kicked. The female was on a bicycle. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the victim and/or any suspects were in the vicinity when law enforcement arrived. No further information is available at this time.

-Brother Threatens to Kill Sister Over Phone, Then Shows Up at Her Home in Niagara Falls with Knife. Law enforcement received a call around 9:43pm on June 12th after reports of a domestic incident on Niagara Street in Niagara Falls. The same caller then made a second call one hour and three minutes later at 10:46pm. In the FIRST call, the 911 caller told police that her 21-year-old brother is threatening to come to her house and kill her. During the SECOND call, the 911 caller told police that her 21-year-old brother showed up to her house. Dispatch could hear yelling, screaming and swearing on the phone. The caller claimed that her brother had a knife in his hands and that he was threatening to kill her. Dispatch Police and AMR responded to the scene. It is unknown if the brother was arrested or taken for mental health treatment. No further information is available at this time.

-Drunk Male Faceplants Off Vehicle and Breaks His Leg During Domestic Incident in North Tonawanda. Law enforcement received a call around 11:16pm on June 12th after reports of a domestic incident on Meadow Drive in North Tonawanda. The 911 caller told police that in the midst of a domestic, the male party who was severely intoxicated fell off of a vehicle. He was bleeding from his face as a result of the fall and also broke his leg. Police, fire and medical responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male party was taken for medical treatment or arrested as a result of the domestic incident. No further information is available at this time.

-Male Shot Near Coastal gas station in Niagara Falls, Violence on 19th Street Continues. Law enforcement received a call around 1:15am on June 13th after reports of a shooting in the area of the Coastal gas station on the 600 block of 19th Street in Niagara Falls. Dispatch reported that there were reports of shots fired on the east side of the building. AMR was immediately requested for a shooting victim who sustained a gunshot wound to his left foot. Police, fire and medical responded to the scene. The gunshot victim was transported to a local hospital for treatment. It is unknown if a suspect was located and/or apprehended. No further information is available at this time.

-Naked Woman Beaten Bloody by Boyfriend Runs for Help to Neighbor in Niagara Falls. Law enforcement received a call around 2:17am on June 13th after reports of a violent domestic incident on Cleveland Avenue in Niagara Falls. The 911 caller told police that a naked, white woman was outside of her home who was being beaten bloody by a male across the street. The woman was screaming, begging for help. While on the phone with dispatch, the caller reported that the male was still outside across the street. Police responded to the scene. It is unknown if the male was arrested. The severity of the woman's injuries are unknown. No further information is available at this time.

Woman Found Buried Behind Niagara Falls House Is Identified



Staff Reports

Niagara Falls police have identified the woman whose body was discovered buried behind a vacant home on 22nd Street, though authorities have not yet publicly released her name while family notification efforts continue.

The grim discovery was made in the early hours of Tuesday, June 9th, during a missing person investigation that led detectives to a shallow grave behind a vacant residence in the 400 block of 22nd Street.

According to investigators, members of the Niagara Falls Police Criminal Investigation Division and Crime Scene Unit uncovered human remains buried in a small makeshift grave behind 417 22nd Street. The burial site measured roughly two feet wide, three feet long and approximately 18 inches deep.

Authorities said the body had been wrapped in blankets before being buried.

Detectives initially arrived in the neighborhood around 8:30am Tuesday while following leads in a missing person case that had officially began the day before. Their first search focused on the backyard of a nearby residence at 423 22nd Street where the woman was believed to have lived.

As the investigation progressed, police deployed a specially trained K-9 unit capable of locating missing persons and human remains. Around 10am, investigators located the burial site behind the neighboring vacant property.

The discovery immediately transformed the investigation from a missing person to homicide.

Police spent roughly four hours excavating the area, carefully digging through the soil and collecting evidence from both the grave and the surrounding area. Crime scene technicians documented the location while detectives worked to determine how the woman ended up buried behind the vacant house.

Authorities said they were unable to immediately determine how long the body had been buried. Investigators have indicated that the condition of the remains made it difficult to establish an exact timeline.

An autopsy was conducted Wednesday by the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office. However, officials said

the examination remains incomplete pending toxicology testing and additional forensic analysis.

As investigators continued gathering evidence, attention turned to a nearby apartment where neighbors said the woman had been living with her boyfriend.

Residents in the neighborhood told investigators they were familiar with the couple and frequently witnessed or heard arguments coming from the residence.

"You could [always] hear them yelling," said one neighbor.

However, according to police audio domestic incidents are normal for this neighborhood.

Several neighbors and friends told investigators they had not seen the woman for months prior to the discovery of her body.

The investigation has also focused on events that occurred just days before the remains were found.

Sources indicated that the woman's boyfriend was hospitalized Sunday after suffering a broken leg during an incident involving Niagara Falls police. Authorities have not publicly disclosed additional details about that encounter.

Police also reportedly received a welfare check request involving the woman that same day.

Detectives returned to the area Tuesday afternoon to continue their investigation. Around mid-afternoon, members of the Criminal Investigation Division and Crime Scene Unit executed a search warrant at the upper apartment of 423 22nd Street where neighbors said the couple had been residing.

Before conducting the search, investigators removed a Husky dog from the residence.

Officers spent several hours processing the apartment and collecting potential evidence connected to the case.

Sources familiar with the investigation said detectives are reviewing security camera recordings from the surrounding area in hopes of establishing a timeline and identifying any activity that may help explain the circumstances surrounding the woman's disappearance and death.

Police have not publicly identified any suspects, although the boyfriend is clearly a person of interest.

The investigation remains ongoing.



BUSINESS & FINANCE

The Automotive Total Cost Matrix: Finding Value in a Shifting Landscape

At the end of the day, a vehicle is the expression and reflection of its owner. This comprehensive analysis maps the true cost per mile behind the engineering.



Sumit Majumdar
Limited Partner, Verite Capital Partners
Lead Director, Energy and Agriculture
Sectors

Every single time we turn a key or press a start button, we are doing more than simply initiating a mechanical process. We are validating a sequence of engineering decisions, capital investments, and environmental realities. In the unique driving environment of Western New York, the platform sitting in your driveway acts as an explicit statement of your operational priorities.

A vehicle is a major financial commitment. In today's highly volatile economic climate, navigating the sheer diversity of propulsion types requires hard math. This updated investigation cuts through the marketing and lays out the reality of modern powertrains using current 2026 local energy pricing. By focusing directly on miles per gallon (MPG), lifetime repair averages, expected vehicle lifespan, and the ultimate equalizer—Total Cost Per Mile—this story empowers you to make a choice that balances your lifestyle with your wallet.

POWERTRAIN ARCHETYPES: ENGINEERING & VALUATION

1. Full & Plug-In Hybrids (HEV/PHEV)

The Architecture: Hybrids pair an internal combustion engine (ICE) with electric motor-generators tied to a compact battery pack. Energy lost during friction braking is recaptured.

The Economics: Hybrids carry zero geographic range anxiety and demand very little lifestyle modification. Because the friction brakes rarely engage during standard deceleration, brake wear is dramatically lower, stabilizing long-term service line items. Average MSRPs range from \$28,000 to \$60,000+, with life expectancies often pushing well past 200,000 miles due to reduced engine strain.

2. Battery Electric Vehicles (EV)

The Architecture: Pure electric platforms completely strip away internal combustion, relying exclusively on large-scale chemical battery packs feeding high-output motors.

The Economics: From a standpoint of raw mechanical simplicity, the EV is unrivaled. There are no valves, timing belts, or oil configurations. However, local economic conditions require serious calculation. With New York residential electricity rates having doubled to surpass 27 cents per kWh in 2026, the charging advantage has narrowed. Vehicle purchase costs range from \$35,000 to \$80,000+, with battery packs typically warranted for 100,000 miles, but often lasting 150,000 to 200,000 miles before noticeable degradation.

3. Advanced Diesel Systems

The Architecture: Compression-ignition systems rely on ultra-high injection pressures, resulting in immense low-speed torque profiles and thermodynamic stability.

The Economics: For heavy-duty operations,

diesel remains fundamentally unmatched. While modern exhaust fluid (DEF) systems add mechanical complexity, the physical durability of these iron-block engines ensures exceptional lifespans of 250,000 to 400,000+ miles. Furthermore, when fueled with advanced biofuels, modern diesel engines become an incredibly effective tool for actively preventing carbon emissions (CO₂e) from entering the atmosphere. Prices typically range from \$55,000 to \$90,000+ for heavy-duty applications.

4. Conventional Gasoline (ICE)

The Architecture: Spark-ignition internal combustion engines running on standard regular unleaded fuel represent over a century of continuous industrial development.

The Economics: The traditional gasoline vehicle offers the lowest point-of-entry cost (ranging \$25,000 to \$50,000 for standard consumer classes). Every independent service station in Western New York can service them. However, they bear the brunt of absolute fuel cost exposure. Over an expected 150,000 to 200,000-mile lifespan, the low initial purchase price is systematically eroded by lower fuel economy metrics and a high lifetime maintenance burden.

THE CORE MATH: TOTAL COST PER MILE

To understand how these technologies impact your monthly cash flow, we must bake everything into a single, undeniable metric: Total Cost Per Mile (CPM). The common assumption that choosing an alternative fuel instantly drops your costs requires careful examination under updated utility parameters.

Calculating the true cost per mile means factoring in the vehicle's depreciation (purchase price minus long-term resale value), the localized fuel costs, and the aggregate maintenance required to keep the platform on the road over a standard 150,000-mile lifecycle. In Western New York right now, standard gasoline has climbed to approximately \$4.30 per gallon, while diesel sits near \$5.50. Simultaneously, residential electricity rates run at a steep 27 cents per kWh. Maintenance is the quiet equalizer: an EV saves on oil changes but burns through heavy, expensive tires, while a gas engine eventually demands timing belts and oxygen sensors.

THE ULTIMATE EQUALIZER: PASSENGER-MILES AND COLLECTIVE TRANSIT

While engineers focus on squeezing small efficiency gains from powertrains, drivers often overlook a simple, highly effective metric: Emissions per Passenger-Mile.

The math here is straightforward and immutable. An ultra-efficient hybrid driven alone carries a higher per-capita energy footprint than a standard, less-efficient gasoline vehicle carrying a full load of passengers.

By simply sharing a ride, the efficiency of the fuel burned is multiplied across every occupant. Carpooling remains an immediate, practical option for reducing energy demand. It requires no new infrastructure, grid upgrades, or mineral mining. When multiple people travel together in a 20 MPG vehicle, the effective fuel economy jumps significantly, demonstrating that passenger management can be just as impactful as advanced engine design.

CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS

Navigating the modern automotive landscape means looking beyond initial aesthetics or promotional pricing. A vehicle serves as a clear reflection of its owner's practical priorities, balancing daily utility against long-term operational costs. By understanding the data behind fuel economy and current regional energy rates, buyers can make balanced decisions that support both financial stability and environmental efficiency. At the end of the day, if you are searching for a vehicle, consider the costs for maintenance.

TABLE 1: ECO-PERFORMANCE HONORABLE MENTIONS

These select platforms represent the pinnacle of operational harmony, setting standard-bearer marks across their sectors for minimizing footprint while maximizing utility:

- **Toyota Prius Prime (Plug-in Hybrid):** The gold standard for localized dual-powertrain synergy. It masterfully bridges short-range battery optimization with reliable ultra-high-efficiency combustion backup.
- **Lucid Air Pure (Electric):** A masterpiece of fluid dynamics and powertrain packaging, delivering over 4.5 miles per kWh to set the luxury standard.
- **Ford F-150 PowerBoost (Full Hybrid):** Proof that substantial payload, towing capacity, and workplace electrical generation do not require sacrificing baseline economics.

TABLE 2: POWERTRAIN LIFECYCLE & RELIABILITY SCORECARD

POWERTRAIN TYPE	AVERAGE MSRP RANGE	AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY	LIFETIME REPAIR AVERAGES (OVER 150K MILES)	CORE DEPRECIATION FACTOR	OVERALL PRACTICALITY INDEX
Hybrid (HEV / PHEV)	\$28,000 - \$60,000	150,000 - 250,000 mi	\$7,000 - \$9,000	Excellent (High Demand)	9.0 / 10
Electric (BEV)	\$35,000 - \$80,000	100,000 - 200,000 mi	\$5,000 - \$7,500	Volatile (Tech Shifts)	7.5 / 10
Advanced Diesel	\$55,000 - \$90,000+	250,000 - 400,000+ mi	\$12,000 - \$16,000	Very Strong (Utility)	7.0 / 10
Conventional Gasoline	\$25,000 - \$50,000	150,000 - 200,000 mi	\$10,000 - \$14,000	Average (Market Saturation)	7.0 / 10

TABLE 3: THE TOTAL COST PER MILE (CPM) MATRIX (STANDARDIZED OVER A 150,000-MILE LIFE CYCLE)

POWERTRAIN MODEL (AVERAGES)	LIFECYCLE DEPRECIATION (EST. INITIAL MSRP - RESALE)	LIFETIME ENERGY COST (AT CURRENT LOCAL NY RATES)	LIFETIME MAINTENANCE (REPAIRS, TIRES, FLUIDS)	TOTAL COST PER MILE (CPM)
Standard Gasoline Car (25 MPG) Fuel Rate: \$4.30/gal	\$28,000	\$25,800	\$10,500	\$0.43 / mile
Heavy Diesel Truck (20 MPG) Fuel Rate: \$5.50/gal	\$40,000	\$41,250	\$12,000	\$0.62 / mile
Battery Electric EV (3.5 mi/kWh) Elec Rate: \$0.27/kWh	\$35,000	\$11,571	\$5,500	\$0.35 / mile
Max Efficiency Hybrid (45 MPG) Fuel Rate: \$4.30/gal	\$29,000	\$14,333	\$7,500	\$0.34 / mile

TABLE 4: TOP 3 MARKETPLACE MATRIX ACROSS MAJOR CONSUMER VEHICLE CLASSES

MARKET SEGMENT	HYBRID CLASSIFICATION (BEST OPERATIONAL HARMONY)	ELECTRIC CLASSIFICATION (BEST ECO/TECH INTEGRATION)	GASOLINE CLASSIFICATION (BEST PURE ENTRY VALUE)	DIESEL CLASSIFICATION (BEST TOWING & LONGEVITY)
Small & Compact Cars	1. Toyota Prius 2. Honda Civic Hybrid 3. Hyundai Elantra Hybrid	1. Tesla Model 3 2. Chevrolet Bolt EV 3. Nissan Leaf	1. Honda Civic 2. Toyota Corolla 3. Volkswagen Jetta	Extensively phased out in North American passenger car segments.
Crossovers & Mid SUVs	1. Toyota RAV4 Hybrid 2. Honda CR-V Hybrid 3. Kia Sportage Hybrid	1. Tesla Model Y 2. Hyundai Ioniq 5 3. Ford Mustang Mach-E	1. Subaru Outback 2. Mazda CX-5 3. Toyota RAV4 (ICE)	1. Chevrolet Tahoe Duramax 2. GMC Yukon Diesel 3. Cadillac Escalade Diesel
Full-Size Pickups	1. Ford F-150 PowerBoost 2. Toyota Tundra i-FORCE MAX 3. Ram 1500 Ramcharger	1. Rivian R1T 2. Ford F-150 Lightning 3. Chevrolet Silverado EV	1. Ford F-150 EcoBoost 2. Chevrolet Silverado 1500 3. Toyota Tacoma	1. Ram 2500 Cummins 2. Ford F-250 Power Stroke 3. Chevy Silverado 2500 Duramax
Jeeps & Dedicated Off-Road	1. Jeep Wrangler 4xe 2. Jeep Grand Cherokee 4xe 3. Toyota Land Cruiser Hybrid	1. Rivian R1S 2. GMC Hummer EV SUV 3. Jeep Recon EV	1. Ford Bronco 2. Jeep Wrangler (ICE) 3. Toyota 4Runner	1. Jeep Wrangler EcoDiesel (Legacy) 2. Land Rover Defender D250
Luxury Sedans & Crossovers	1. Lexus ES Hybrid 2. Volvo S90 Recharge 3. BMW 330e	1. Lucid Air Pure 2. Porsche Taycan 3. Mercedes-Benz EQS	1. Genesis G70 2. Audi A4 3. Mercedes-Benz C-Class	1. Range Rover TD6 Diesel 2. BMW X5 xDrive30d (Global)

TABLE 5: THE PASSENGER-MILE MULTIPLIER (EFFICIENCY DYNAMICS OF CARPOOLING)

TOTAL VEHICLE OCCUPANTS	BASE MECHANICAL FUEL ECONOMY	EFFECTIVE PASSENGER-MPG (P-MPG)	PER-CAPITA REGIONAL EMISSIONS REDUCTION STATUS	COMPARATIVE POWERTRAIN EQUIVALENT ANALYSIS
1 (Solo Operator Journey)	20 MPG	20 p-mpg	Baseline Reference (100% Carbon Footprint)	Standard baseline for individual commuter profiles.
2 Occupants Shared Ride	20 MPG	40 p-mpg	50% Per-Capita Emissions Prevented	Instantly matches or exceeds standard compact sedan efficiency.
3 Occupants Shared Ride	20 MPG	60 p-mpg	66.6% Per-Capita Emissions Prevented	Outperforms a solo driver in a high-efficiency 50 MPG hybrid.
4 Occupants Shared Ride	20 MPG	80 p-mpg	75% Per-Capita Emissions Prevented	Surpasses solo commuter performance across all standard platforms.
5 Occupants Maximum Load	20 MPG	100 p-mpg	80% Per-Capita Emissions Prevented	Achieves high-efficiency group transit metrics using existing tech.

About the Author:

Sumit Majumdar is a Limited Partner at Verite Capital Partners and Lead Director for Energy and Agriculture. 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

51,202.26



NASDAQ

25,888.84



S&P 500

7,431.46



TSX (CANADA)

34,937.85



NIKKEI 225

66,020.04



SSE (CHINA)

4,031.51



FTSE 100 (UK)

10,471.72

METALS COMMODITIES



GOLD

\$4,218.62 per troy oz.



SILVER

67.48 per troy oz.



COPPER

\$13,500 per metric ton



PLATINUM

\$1,736.10 per troy oz.



PALLADIUM

\$1,310.33 per troy oz.



TIN

\$53,752 per metric ton



NICKEL

\$17,830 per metric ton



ZINC

\$3,584 per metric ton



ALUMINUM

\$3,536 per metric ton



LIVESTOCK



LIVE CATTLE

\$2.49 lb.



FEEDER CATTLE

\$3.57 lb.



LEAN HOGS

\$.975 lb.



BEEF

\$391.93 cwt



POULTRY

\$1.25 lb.

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES



COFFEE

\$2.57 lb.



SUGAR

\$.137 lb.



CORN

\$4.12 bushel



SOYBEANS

\$11.13 bushel



WHEAT

\$5.84 bushel



COTTON

\$.73 lb.



FCOJ

\$1.63 lb.

ENERGY COMMODITIES



GASOLINE

\$4.06 gallon avg.



DIESEL

\$5.21 gallon avg.



NATURAL GAS

\$3.15 MMBtu



HEATING OIL

\$3.28 gallon



WTI (West Texas int.)

\$84.88 barrel



BRENT CRUDE

\$87.33 barrel



USED COOKING OIL (UCO)

\$.78 per lb.

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME

AS OF 6AM MONDAY, JUNE 15TH, 2026

NA CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

WARP CORES & SPACE SOLAR SPREADS

From Shatner Reruns to Real-World Energy Generation: A Trekkie's Diagnostic



Sumit Majumdar

Limited Partner, Verite Capital Partners
Lead Director, Energy and Agriculture
Sectors

All this talk about the world's shifting grid infrastructure, carbon management, and energy independence always leads me back to one defining reality: I am an unrepentant, lifelong Trekkie. It started with late-night reruns of William Shatner chewing scenery as Captain Kirk alongside the original crew. But it was waiting week by week for each brand-new episode of The Next Generation to release that truly drew my attention directly to the engineering team. While others cheered for phaser fights, I was captivated by the miracle workers under the floor plates.

Whether it was Scotty screaming about the engines cooling or Geordi modifying the phase variance of a deflector dish, I kept wondering: *Is this tech actually real? Or is it all just space magic?* Let's break down Starfleet's core energy models to see where Hollywood screenwriting ends and actual, hard planetary truth begins.

THE DILITHIUM DELUSION

Whenever Starfleet runs out of juice, the script inevitably calls for finding or mining Dilithium Crystals. For decades, fans have wondered when we can start mining dilithium to solve the world's energy problems. Well, here is the hard truth directly from the diagnostic terminal: Dilithium doesn't actually produce a single watt of energy. *"Captain, the dilithium crystals are degenerating! If we push 'em any harder, the containment field will collapse and we'll be spread across the quadrant!"* — **CHIEF ENGINEER MONTGOMERY "SCOTTY" SCOTT, USS ENTERPRISE**

In Star Trek lore, a warp core reacts matter (deuterium) with antimatter (anti-deuterium). When they touch, they annihilate, releasing 100% of their mass as

pure energy. Dilithium is simply the only crystalline material in the universe that is completely non-reactive to antimatter when exposed to a high-frequency electromagnetic field. It acts purely as a regulator, focusing the volatile explosion into controlled electro-plasma streams.

Mining dilithium won't solve our problems because we don't have the antimatter fuel to feed it. While antimatter is completely real—we create tiny fractions of nanograms at CERN and utilize positrons daily in hospital PET scans—the energy required to manufacture it far exceeds what we get back. It is the ultimate battery, but it requires a cosmic charging station we haven't built yet.

THE IMPULSE DRIVE IS HERE

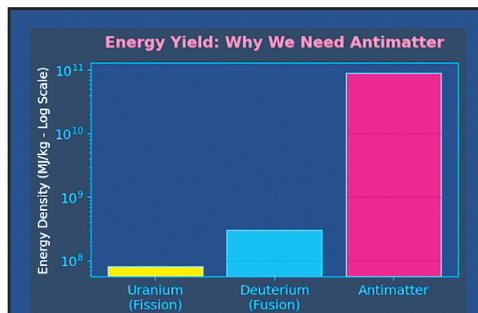


Figure 2: Comparative Energy Density. Matter-Antimatter annihilation leaves even nuclear fusion in the dust, explaining Starfleet's engineering obsession.

When a starship is cruising inside a solar system, it drops out of warp and relies on its Impulse Engines. Thanks to engineers like Geordi La Forge and B'Elanna Torres, we know these sublight drives are powered by high-yield nuclear fusion reactors.

"I'm venting the plasma from the primary fusion core directly through the impulse ports. It's crude, it's messy, but it'll give us enough push to clear the gravity well." — **CHIEF ENGINEER B'ELANNA TORRES, USS VOYAGER**

Unlike the antimatter warp core, Nuclear Fusion is a technology we are aggressively executing on Earth right now. By slamming isotopes of hydrogen together under extreme pressure and temperature, we create a mini-star in a jar, venting massive energy without high-level radioactive waste.

Real-world facilities like the Nation-

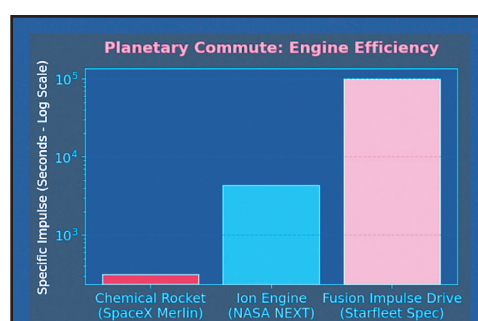


Figure 3: Specific Impulse comparison showcasing the efficiency leap from chemical rockets to fusion-powered options.

al Ignition Facility (NIF) have achieved "scientific breakeven," pulling more energy out of a controlled fusion reaction than the trigger lasers put in. We aren't quite at the point of scaling them onto com-

pact starship chassis like B'Elanna's, but ground-based commercial fusion grids are moving out of science fiction and into our lifetime.

DYSON SPHERES VS. SPACE SOLAR

In the classic TNG episode "Relics," the crew discovers a megastructure completely enclosing a star: a Dyson Sphere, designed to capture 100% of the star's solar output. In the modern era, tech billionaires like Elon Musk are frequently discussed in the context of building these massive sci-fi systems.

"The computer logs show this structure has a diameter of two hundred million kilometers. It's a completely hollow sphere enclosing the star. The internal surface area is equivalent to millions of Earths." — **LT. COMMANDER GEORDI LA FORGE, USS ENTERPRISE-D**

Let's do a quick structural check: Elon Musk cannot build a Dyson Sphere. No one can. A solid shell enclosing a star requires more tensile strength than any chemical bond in known materials science can provide. The gravitational stresses would tear it apart in minutes, and it would require grinding up entire planets just for raw building materials.

However, what is completely possi-

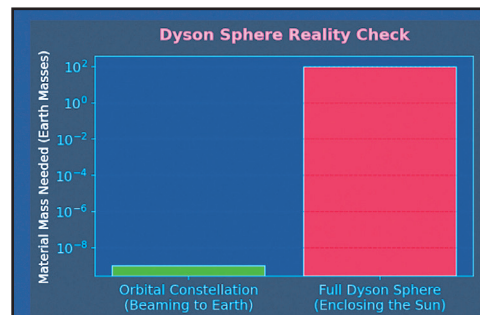


Figure 4: Material Mass Constraints. A solid Dyson Sphere requires tearing up whole solar systems, whereas an orbital constellation requires a fraction of planetary mass.

ble—and actively being engineered—is Space-Based Solar Power (SBSP). Instead of building a solid shell, we can launch constellations of orbital satellites equipped with highly efficient solar panels, completely unhindered by atmospheric scattering, clouds, or the pesky inconvenience of nighttime.

The real secret sauce to making this

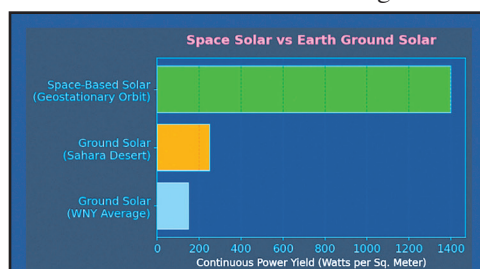


Figure 5: Solar irradiance yields. Space-based collectors capture uninterrupted, raw solar energy at orders of magnitude higher than ground-based arrays.

work is wireless power beaming. By converting the collected orbital electricity into tightly focused microwave beams, we can transmit the energy down to ground-based

"rectennas" (receiving antennas) on the surface, feeding clean power directly into our municipal grids. Caltech has already successfully demonstrated wireless power beaming from space down to Earth using their SSPD-1 satellite. It isn't fantasy; it is working hardware in orbit right now.

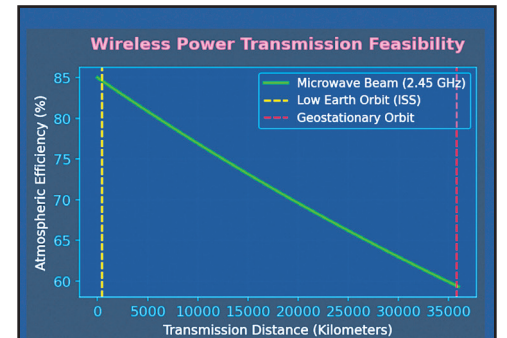


Figure 6: Atmospheric efficiency curves for microwave power beaming across distances, verifying the viability of geostationary

This decentralized, beamed approach matches the modular flexibility of Starfleet's Electro-Plasma System (EPS) grids, managed by quick-witted modern engineers like Jett Reno. It shifts the paradigm from fragile, centralized power stations to an agile orbital energy architecture.

ENGINEERING LOG: CMDR. JETT RENO

"Look, if you want to route microwave beams from a satellite down to a planet without turning the local wildlife into microwave popcorn, you need tight phase coordination. It's not rocket science—well, technically it is rocket science, but it's nothing a roll of high-tensile tape and a decent sub-harmonic filter can't handle."

THE GRID OF TOMORROW

From Trip Tucker trying to keep the NX-01's early sublight ion thrusters from freezing up, to modern grid operators balancing variable solar inputs on Earth, the lesson of Star Trek is clear: energy management is a dynamic, creative puzzle. We may not have dilithium mines or antimatter warp drives today, but the foundational blocks—fusion, ion propulsion, and space-based solar beaming—are actively clearing their technical milestones.

ENGAGE YOUR ENERGY FUTURE

The engineering solutions to our world's climate and resource challenges are being forged by the real-world equivalents of Starfleet's best. So do yourself a favor: grab some popcorn, go watch some classic Star Trek, and get genuinely excited about the energy future we are actively building. There are starships to engineer, grids to upgrade, and a cosmos waiting for us.

Let's do the work, look to the stars, and—above all else—live long and prosper.

About the Author:

Sumit Majumdar is a Limited Partner at Verite Capital Partners and Lead Director for Energy and Agriculture. 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.



HOROSCOPES, FUNNIES & PUZZLES

7	2	6	9	8	5		4	3
4					1			9
8	1		4				6	
9		3			6			8
	6	4				7	5	
	5		7	2	4			
6				4	2	3	9	5
	9		6	5		2		
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		9				6	2	
3	6	4			9		5	
7			1				6	
6	1	2			8			5
		3	5		7	1	8	2
	2	6	4	8				
			6	2	1	5	3	
			9			2		

Top 20 Most Popular Farm Animals

QESVNOBHNBEERABBITBOGICVC
CYAKBQAWAXZLVPNWKDMRUMDFZ
XCARPQQAEUEUZISQQBQITFTDT
PHLCELBTHULJGHBRYMDNGZEK
IIPFOHVESCWXONEGCCSVEARVI
ACAGEOSRWGOFUREWWQIYAWYZH
XKCEKNMBNOBWMRPPGDKNFZQAG
KEAPNHLULAORBUKKUWOOTGCR
MNYLCESFITOFKCTGOOGWBUIY
XMAQYAWFKRYWSAIDUOBDLYJCN
ZNIGVVQAINWNSQTRJZOTLWWVY
RFHWYHLWZLYEMUKPLXSHDXC
QOZTGJWOXUJARZZEWUGRERTVS
GTADCNHHRSZWUDYXNGLIKPZO
ZFRPSMZGLXDONKEYCOATACOB
LNOIOTAZBZTPKWDNRUDUSJUBU
VZXVEJGTALXBSRBUGSWHJTQTW
PKCIGIOZNSWSPGBZLCMDOORPFI
SEVBUGRTL LAMARJT TKT RMMULE
SPAVWPYGYEGWSVMHAYEJFDRPW
YRXFZNEPMGPHEOTTETAHTFTRV
MNKXOBBQV KVOUUCKPUIFZMWSK
KJEXEWOSMRNRTJMIYPXELYVAU
XYFTDNLISIUSLICXVRZKBF S FM
SYJUORVAAPQEI KEKMJZFRNFXO

Water Buffalo	Guinea Fowl	Chicken	Goat
Peafowl	Turkey	Rabbit	Mule
Donkey	Alpaca	Horse	Cow
Sheep	Goose	Llama	Yak
Duck	Pig	Emu	Bee

THE INTERACTIVE WNY SUMMER FUN ZONE!

POP QUIZ! (CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER)

- What causes the ocean breeze in summer?
A) The ocean water heats up faster than the land
B) Cool air from the ocean moves toward warm land
C) The wind always blows from east to west
- Which star constellation is best seen in summer nights?
A) Orion
B) Scorpius
C) Cassiopeia
- What fruit is technically a berry?
A) Strawberry
B) Watermelon
C) Pineapple

BIRD WATCH: SPEND 30 MINUTES OUTSIDE.

Take 30 minutes and write down all the different types of birds you see. If you need help, download an app!

WNY SUMMER BINGO

Take this paper outside and cross off these local WNY summer phenomenons as you spot them!

B	I	N	G	O
Boat parade on the canal	Fresh sweet corn from a roadside stand	Slip 'n slide in the backyard	Hearing a thunderstorm roll in	Fireflies lighting up the night
Lighthouse on a sunny day	Patio dinner at a local restaurant	FREE SPACE (You survived Winter)	Floating on a tube down a river	Finding a painted rock on a trail
Watching a milky way on a clear summer night	Homemade ice cream or gelato	A perfect rainbow after a summer shower	Farmers market fresh berries	Live music at an outdoor concert
Sunrise over Lake Erie	Camping under the stars	Water balloon fight	Seeing a hot air balloon	Sprinkler fun on a hot day
Keuka Lake wine tasting	Backyard BBQ with friends	Hiking in Letchworth State Park	Paddle-boarding or kayaking	S'mores around a campfire

NIAGARA ACTION

— BI-WEEKLY HOROSCOPE —



ARIES (March 21 – April 19)

A renewed sense of purpose helps you tackle challenges that have lingered in recent weeks. Focus on finishing what you've started before taking on new commitments. A conversation with someone you trust may provide valuable direction. Stay patient with financial decisions and avoid unnecessary risks.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 20)

This week favors stability and practical thinking. You may find success by focusing on the small details that others overlook. Relationships benefit from honesty and consistency. A personal goal you've been working toward could show encouraging signs of progress.

GEMINI (May 21 – June 20)

Your season concludes with a burst of activity and opportunity. Important conversations, networking, and social connections may open unexpected doors. Stay organized as multiple priorities compete for your attention. A positive development near the weekend boosts your confidence.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)

Your birthday season begins, bringing fresh energy and a stronger focus on personal goals. This is a good time to evaluate where you want to go next and what truly matters to you. Trust your instincts and don't be afraid to put your needs first for a change.

LEO (July 23 – August 22)

A quieter pace may help you gain valuable perspective. Take time to reflect before making major decisions. Rest and preparation now will help you take advantage of opportunities arriving in the weeks ahead. Avoid unnecessary drama and focus on maintaining balance.

VIRGO (August 23 – September 22)

Friends, colleagues, and community connections play an important role this week. Collaboration leads to better results than trying to do everything yourself. Stay open to advice and new ideas. A group effort may produce an outcome better than expected.

LIBRA (September 23 – October 22)

Career matters move into focus. You may find yourself receiving recognition or additional responsibility. Stay confident in your abilities while remaining flexible when plans change. Professional progress comes through persistence rather than perfection.

SCORPIO (October 23 – November 21)

A desire for growth and new experiences pushes you to think beyond your usual routine. Learning opportunities, travel plans, or future goals may become more appealing. Stay curious and willing to explore unfamiliar territory. A fresh perspective proves valuable.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 – December 21)

Financial planning and long-term commitments deserve extra attention. Avoid rushing important decisions. Honest discussions help clear up misunderstandings and create greater stability. Trust your instincts, but make sure you're working with complete information.

CAPRICORN (December 22 – January 19)

Partnerships take center stage. Whether in business or personal relationships, cooperation brings better results than competition. Be willing to compromise where necessary. A meaningful conversation could strengthen an important connection.

AQUARIUS (January 20 – February 18)

Productivity becomes a major theme. Organizing your schedule and focusing on priorities helps reduce stress and increase efficiency. Small improvements in daily routines may lead to significant long-term benefits. Consistency is your greatest asset this week.

PISCES (February 19 – March 20)

Creativity, enjoyment, and personal expression are highlighted. Spend time doing things that inspire you and bring genuine happiness. Social events or hobbies may lead to unexpected opportunities. Let yourself enjoy the moment without worrying about what's next.

