Celebrate Black History at Voices of Freedom Park

Winter parking problem stirs up Glendale residents

Penny Coles
The Local

When it comes to parking problems, Niagara-on-the-Lake is no different than most municipalities, and is actually a little easier on residents than many others.

Council recently eliminated its overnight parking ban, but parking in one spot is not allowed for more than 12 hours, and is prohibited during snow clearing operations, when parking becomes a costly issue for some residents.

In Niagara-on-the-Green, where parking has been a problem since the first houses were built, residents are becoming increasingly frustrated by the tickets they have received during recent snowfalls.

They see the signs. They understand the bylaws. What they don’t understand, they say, is what to do.

“I’m seriously frustrated with the town coming through the Niagara-on-the-Green area, especially along Robertson Road, to find their gold,” says Luise Postman.

“We are under lockdown. We are ordered to stay at home. We have lost our jobs. And here the town comes, faithfully 24/7, around the clock, rain or shine, dark or light, to ticket our cars,” she says.

“We are working so hard to find another kind neighbour who will let us park on their driveway,” Postman, who moved to Niagara-on-the-Green in 2006, says it’s a beautiful place to live, but “when will this stop? When will the town have some mercy on us?”

The parking issue has gone “over the roof, and spoils everything that is nice about this town. I truly hope this will end, and a change will happen.”

Daniel St-Jean lives on

Continued on page 9
Budget covers extended on-demand transit

Penny Coles  
The Local

Last week’s council meeting to discuss the 2021 budget left no question of councillors’ strong support for the library, and the good work it does for the community. But a key request by the library was in the end denied, a “disappointing, but not devastating,” result, said board chair Daryl Novak following the meeting.

The issue was what to do with a surplus the library is posting from 2020. The amount is expected to be finalized in February, but is looking like it will be about $100,000. About 73 per cent of the surplus was accrued from the layoff of staff, along with a reduction of hours for those still working, during the time the library was closed due to the pandemic, and then when it reopened with a reduction in services, explained library CEO Cathy Simpson at the special council meeting last week.

Some positions have been eliminated, and one full-time person replaced by two part-timers.

Also, two part-time staff quit. One has been replaced, and the other will be hired later this year, Simpson said.

The recommendation from the audit committee was that in a difficult year, with drops in revenue due to the pandemic, to use 75 per cent of the library surplus to offset the tax levy increase.

The library board was asking that the town only direct 50 per cent toward tax relief, leaving the remainder to put toward library reserves.

The reasoning behind the request for the commission, explained board chair Daryl Novak, was for the library to work with the town during a difficult time, while leaving enough in library reserves to help cover future capital costs, such as technology updates, which can improve virtual programming for the community.

It would also help those who can’t afford to access those programs, by providing internet hotspots, tablets and laptops for those who can’t afford them.

The final decision of council was to leave the amount going to the town at 50 per cent of the surplus, and for the library to put the remaining portion of its reserves toward its operating budget.

“We’re subtracting the surplus from the grant amount, but putting it back in further down in a budget line,” explained Coun. Allan Bissback, chair of the audit committee, to clarify that the library is still receiving the same amount from the town.

Novak said the board is concerned about the town showing the library grant reduced to $675,796, as opposed to the $750,996 it received last year, as the lower amount would become the base figure for the future.

“The grant was cut as a one-time event,” said Coun. Allan Bissback, “but it is not the intent that it become a new base.”

In her presentation during the special council meeting Wednesday, library CEO Cathy Simpson told councillors the library has maintained a zero annual collection development budget, absorbing salary increases, and allowing for an increase to the e-resource budget. It has also created a new virtual programming budget, “critical to connecting the community, and critical to delivering library services during the pandemic, when in-person visits aren’t possible. Library computer use are often limited, and sometimes eliminated, depending on public health directives.”

They have also revised their 10-year capital plan, eliminating $128,000 in capital, absorbing salary increases, and saving the cost of books, DVDs, and other library materials, which is part of the service the region offers, says operations manager Sheldon Randall. At the moment, the local on-demand service is only a “disappointing, but not devastating,” result, said board chair Daryl Novak following the meeting.

The vehicles, he says, are looking like it will be a “disappointing, but not devastating,” result, said board chair Daryl Novak following the meeting.

When the bus is in service, it has a passenger, and for the library, it’s still the same cost.”

He also notes that once the data they have, it will be critical to see how much of a pandemic, when people are not using the service to go to work or school.

Library budget approved, but not as requested

Penny Coles  
The Local

Coun. Allan Bissback, Norm Arsenault, Wendy Chenopita, Jeff Vyse, manager of public works, adding director of operations Kevin Tartuce, Coun. Gary Burnoughs (back), Regional Chair Jim Bradley, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Regional Councillor Gary Zanoni were at the community centre to celebrate the launch of a shared-ride, on-demand transit system, a year-long pilot project launched in November. There is room in the budget for two more vans to extend the service to St. Davids and Queenston. (Mike Balsom)
In Niagara, he says, tourism has lost its international visitors, including Americans. They are the tourists who stay longer and spend more. The U.S. is doing much better at its vaccinations than Canada, projecting a completion time of June, and at that point, the number of incoming visitors may begin, but there is no sign of a plan for how to deal with it. In Canada, “if we remain on track for vaccinations completed September, we’re still missing another tourism season, and we’re now into the shoulder season,” he says.

“We all recognize we’re not going to open borders at any time soon, but when do we do it? How is the plan for vaccines and testing as part of getting those borders open? What is our recovery plan going forward?”

There is an online petition asking all Canadian citizens, whether in the tourism industry or not, to sign, and help propel the federal government to begin the discussion.

As an example, he says, Calgary has a pilot project working for people to fly in the province. “How do we take that information and start to plan how to use it in similar places, like Niagara with four border crossings?”

The petition also talks about developing targeted health guidelines, which include a combination of federal and provincial programs which enable sectors to resume work operations in a safe and responsible manner when they’re able to re-open. It also asks for funds for small businesses to make health and safety changes to help handle those situations safely when businesses do open.

In December, he says, the unemployment rate in Canada was less than 8.6 per cent. But in the tourism sector, it was 14.6 per cent, 10 per cent points higher than it was in December 2019. The accommodation and food and beverage industries were both higher than the general unemployment rate.

The tourism sector, Baldi- nell says, employs one in every 11 Canadians, and a third of Ontario small businesses have said they may not survive this second lockdown.

“This is the sector that’s hardest hit, and will take the longest to recover,” he says. “There is a lot of work to do to ensure these sectors can get through this second wave.”

Across Niagara region, 40,000 tourism-related jobs were lost, he says. “That’s 40,000 of our friends and neighbours,” he adds. “We need a recovery plan to provide some security for them to reopen.”

Some details of a plan would restore confidence in the tourism industry, and would be “throwing a life-line” for those who aren’t sure about their future, he says. The petition is online until Feb. 7 and is doing well says Baldinelli. It’s important for all Canadians to show support for those working in the tourism industry, and this petition, initiated by Billy Morison, his communications advisor and legislative assistant, “captures what I’ve been hearing.”

It asks the federal government to present a sector-specific tourism recovery plan by the date of the 2021 federal budget, which has not yet been announced, and that it addresses the specific needs of tourism sectors across Canada, including “the urgent and complete development, implementation, and deployment of Health Canada-approved vaccines and rapid testing devices.”

The plan should also include “sector-specific health guidelines, which enable sectors to resume work operations in a safe and responsible manner,” and be used “as a tool to begin restoring public confidence in travel and tourism.”

You can sign the petition online at: https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details/Petition=3027

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**Search and rescue volunteer hangs up his wings**

Randy Kaassen, Special to The Local

More than 30 years of flying as a volunteer search and rescue pilot, Ron Guenther made his final flight as pilot in command, before reiting his pilot’s licence last Saturday.

For most of those years, Guenther was a part-owner and piloted the Cesna 182 known as CF-FIPO, formerly located at Brampton Airport, now based at Niagara District Airport.

When Guenther heard about the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA), he was getting experience as a general aviation pilot. Joining the Niagara unit, based at Niagara District Airport, he first trained as a spotter, then as a navigator, before earning his search and rescue (SAR) pilot wings.

“In general aviation you have the call sign, ‘Where do you want another?’” Guenther explains. “In SAR flying the goal is to fly in a concentrated area, at a low altitude, often even through road intersections. The purpose is to give spotters the best opportunity to identify the search object. As pilot, it takes a great deal of concentration, as things can go wrong very quickly. That’s why CASARA crews work as a team.”

Guenther, also a local volunteer search and rescue pilot, lot, acknowledges Guenther’s contributions. “Ron has flown thousands of hours searching for Canadians in distress with CASARA, in his Cesna 182. He is also a member of the CASARA Ontario executive, where his professional experience as an accountant has been instrumental in bringing CASARA to where it is today. He has survived crashes, engine failures,” says Tessier, “and most of all, he has survived training me as a SAR pilot,” he jokes.

Reflecting on his years of experience, Guenther recalls flying on a major search out of North Bay, which lasted over two weeks. “The challenge was to know the name of the person you are searching for, and you share the anxiety of family members who are waiting to hear news. It can be stressful, because you know time is everything.”

A search and rescue spot- ter for many years, Shane Barton says, “over the years Ron has provided some very interesting and enlightening mentoring, both in the classroom and in the air. He is always willing to share experiences and suggestions of crew members, and works to make sure crew members work as one cohesive unit. He always takes whatever steps needed to ensure the safety of his crew and to ensure the mission is completed.”

CASARA is a national volunteer organization with tasking and coordination provided by Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre (JRCC), which is operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force. In the region of Southern Ontario, CASARA Niagara also trains with the Canadian Coast Guard, and various volunteer search and rescue organizations for searching over the Great Lakes.

Long-time CASARA pilot Ron Guenther credits Guenther’s contributions to aviation safety: “He has been instrumen- tal in lending his knowledge, skills and mentoring to the betterment of not only CASARA Niagara, but also to the CASARA National program.”

While Guenther is giving up his pilot’s licence, he will continue volunteering with the local search and rescue association as a navigator, and with the CASARA Ontario executive.

Landing at Niagara Dist- rict Airport, Guenther was met by a few CASARA members, to celebrate his final flight as pilot. They were joined by CASARA Ontario president Claude Overholt, and Capt. David Baird of JROC Trenton to celebrate the important milestone. It is hoped the entire membership can have a celebration with Guenther when COVID lim- itations are lifted.

CASARA Niagara de- pends on charitable donations for its base operations. The 30 volunteers maintain constant prepared-to-launch status, now with two available aircraft at Niagara District Airport. For more informa- tion, see the website, http:// caresenaga.ca.

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**MP urges federal tourism recovery plan**

Penny Coles, The Local

Tony Baldinelli says he has been asking the federal gov- ernment for a recovery plan specific to the tourism indus- try since last March. He’s still waiting. He under- stands that the return of tourists in is the future, but the time to be planning for that return is now — in fact, it was many months ago, he says.

The Conservative MP represents the Niagara Falls rid- ing, but the urgent need is for a recovery plan that covers the different tourism sectors across Canada, with each ex- periencing its own specific issues, as well as many over- lapping problems, such as the closure of businesses and the loss of jobs.

In Niagara, he says, tourism has lost its international visitors, including Americans. They are the tourists who stay longer and spend more. The U.S. is doing much better at its vaccinations than Canada, projecting a completion time of June, and at that point, the number of incoming visitors may begin, but there is no sign of a plan for how to deal with it. In Canada, “if we remain on track for vaccinations completed September, we’ve still missed another tourism season, and we’re now into the shoulder season,” he says.

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York Road building so much more than a church

Bernie Puchalski Special to The Local

The roots of the Central Community Church date back to 1921, when the congregation tired of meeting in four different locations and decided to purchase a United church on Queenston Street and Thotward Road for $8,000.

On the night before the down payment was due, then Rev James Montgomery was pacing around his house, worried that the deal would fall through because he didn’t have enough money to make the payment. His wife told him to go for a walk and during that walk a stranger came up to Montgomery and handed him $100 to guarantee that the deal would go through.

That $100 was a generous gift in 1921 but is a pittance compared to the $7 million the gift in 1921 but is a pittance would go through.

Walking around his house, wondering that the deal would fall through, Montgomery started at the church 20 years ago, it had 400 members.

The church, which has more than 3,000 members, averages more than 2,000 people attending services every Sunday. Between 400 and 500 kids take part in the church children’s ministry. When Markham started at the church 20 years ago, it had 400 members.

The church is being built for those members and the entire community.

“The key phrase for us is that there is no single purpose space,” Markham said. “We build it so that not only would the church be able to use it, but the community would be able to use it.”

The building is part of the church’s goal of making the community better and being a partner with the community by working hand-in-hand, especially with youth and athletics.

“You know my passion for developing athletes, because I think it develops body, mind and spirit. We designed this space for the next generation,” said Markham, who coaches the highly successful Eden boys volleyball program. “For me, it has always been about how I can leave this world a better place. That sounds pretty idealistic but it’s true and my involvement with sports in Niagara demonstrates the power of connecting people that way and helping them believe in themselves and if we can do that, that would be an amazing legacy.”

That legacy will also include outdoor facilities. The property has six acres of space that the church is planning to eventually use for a soccer field, splash pad, outdoor barbecue and fire pits, and an outdoor skating rink for the community to use in winter. A cricket field has also been discussed.

“Depends on what the board wants, what the church wants and what the community wants,” McArthur said. “One of the reasons why the region and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake like us so much is that we are not building a church. We are building a community centre.”

It is a community centre for every nationality.

“We are building a facility that can accommodate all the sports that are popular in Niagara and ones that are not,” Markham said.

That is being done with an eye to the future.

“This area is changing,” McArthur said. “Brampton looks different, Mississauga looks different and 10 years from now, Niagara will look different.”

The church is already in discussions with indoor soccer association Futbol Niagara, the Niagara Rapids travel volleyball program, the Niagara River Lions pro basketball franchise and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club.

Interest has also been expressed by badminton, cricket, tennis and other family-friendly activities and clubs.

Central in the process is figuring out what its rental rates will be when the building is completed in the middle of 2022.

“As a business guy, I know exactly what I would charge but that’s not what a church does. It has a community component,” McArthur said.

Markham agrees with that assessment.

“The reality is that most people will pay for a premium experience but we will also try to accommodate those who can’t.”

The building will also accommodate much more than just sports. The lobby is being built to handle 1,000 people in a standing reception, there are boardrooms and meeting rooms on the second floor and the first floor will include a 65-space day care centre. On Sunday, the day care space will have a 65-space day care. On the first floor, the lobby is being built to accommodate those who can’t. “It depends on what the board wants, what the church wants and what the community wants,” McArthur said.

A cricket field has also been discussed.

“I am honoured to be a part of what is taking place in Niagara-on-the-Lake. What is to come for our community going into 2021 is going to be fantastic.”

Bernie Puchalski is an award-winning winner who worked for Niagara dailies for more than 27 years, as a news reporter, sports reporter and sports editor. Through TBP Sports Niagara, he now provides people-focused, grassroots coverage of local sports.
Challenging year for icewine

He can point to many projects in town and around the region that continue, he said, in each case, because they are considered essential. A church is not. However, in the case of the Central Community Church, about 19 per cent of its space is for day care, and the provincial list of exceptions includes buildings that will provide day care space, licensed under provincial legislation.

It’s a new day care centre, slated to open this summer. When asked Monday night if the centre was licensed, McArthur said the application is in process. All spots, including the most needed spaces for infants, are filled, with parents anxious for it to open. It will stay open evenings until 9 p.m., which few day care centres do, making it easier for many parents who work evening hours.

The construction at York Road may comply with the day care provision if licensed under the Child Care and Early Years Act, said planning director Craig Larmour Tuesday morning, but “that has yet to be confirmed.”

An organization that is a registered charity is considered essential “if intended to provide shelter or supports for vulnerable persons,” says Larmour, but “there has been no indication that this project is intended for the purpose identified” under that description of an essential service.

McArthur explained Monday evening the work of the community church, and the reason for its large community centre and child care component. In his view, the community space for all kinds of sports programs and day camps will be helping vulnerable children. He refers to the need for opening it as a mental health issue, for all ages, from children to the elderly.

The biggest issue with the construction delay, which, if it continues, will likely see the crew moved to other projects, “is the health aspect” of what the community centre hopes to provide on the site, looking after children when their parents are at work, both through its day care and sports programming.

He spoke of the impact the pandemic is having on children and parents, and the importance of getting the centre open and operating for the summer.

“The church is for Sundays,” he said, the community centre, day care and programming for people of all ages, the rest of the week.

He assured councillors the construction site is an 80,000 square foot space with about 50 people working on it. “We’ve been in a bubble and a very well-run bubble. This bubble that we’ve created is working in different departments, different areas of the building, and they go home and come back to the same project.”

These people are now looking to go and work elsewhere, and that controlled bubble becomes less controlled, he said.

There were no issues with the number of workers on the site or with safety protocols, Larmour said Tuesday.

Lord Mayor Betty Deseiro told McArthur she would contact the provincial minister of labour, Monte McNaughton, Tuesday, and asked McArthur to call her before that to further discuss his request.

She too questioned why a homeless shelter could be considered essential, but not a community centre, and mentioned many situations last spring, and some that continue today, such as dog grooming, that indicate the provincial regulations in place are not perfect, and have been “adjusted from time to time.” She said there are questions about the provincial regulations that need to be answered, and agreed with Coun. Gary Burroughs that a quick response is required.

Coun. Allan Busback asked if “staff interpreted this appropriately,” and Larmour agreed that while the provincial regulations require some interpretations, “it’s fairly clear” on the type of construction that’s allowed to occur.

A VERY HAPPY 64TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

WISHING
David & Diana Hepburn
A VERY HAPPY
64TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

Love Alison, Suzanne and families

Day or night, harvest goes on

While the early days of harvesting icewine was always done at night, by hand, in the coldest temperatures, growers now are happy to go out when the grapes are sufficiently frozen to produce icewine juice. Joe Pillitteri, of Lakeview Vineyard Equipment, supports growers with his harvesters, which shake the grapes, destemming them so they fall through the nets. Lakeview harvested grapes for Cool Vineyards on Line 5 and Reif Estate Winery on the Niagara Parkway this year. (Photo supplied)

The bulk of the Konzelmann Estate Winery harvest this year was for the Vidal Special Select Late Harvest as well as a small amount of Vidal icewine, harvested over two days. Warmer than normal temperatures made for a challenging year, but the winery is excited about the 2020 vintage. (Photos supplied)
Let’s try to tip the scales from anger to kindness

There is good news around us, if we look for it. That light at the end of the tunnel. Vaccinations to get us there. Maybe vacations. Sunshine, warm weather, barbecues around the pool or at the lake. But for some, hard times to get through first. For some, really hard times.

Imagine being a small business owner, shut down temporarily, maybe for good. Picture the many laid-off staff, with family depending on them, not knowing if they will have a job to go back to.

Monday evening, as I listened to the live-streamed town planning committee meeting, which touched briefly on some construction site on York Road, and specifically the very large receipt. Thank you for being here to hear it. There is good news around the pool or at the lake. Maybe vacations. Sunshine, warm weather, barbecues around the pool.

One municipality sees it one way, another differently. And another, decisions are made, livelihoods affected. And then, after a few weeks of complaints, thank you for all you do to keep the rest of us safe.

Maybe those small words will help someone through a difficult day. Maybe the recipient will think to pass it on to someone else who really needs to hear it.

We challenge people to go out of their way to say something kind to someone. It might just be the one light in someone’s day, or the few words that tip the scale a little toward a good day, or even just a bearable day, for that person.

There are no magic words that will take away the anger or the hurt or the hardship of what people are going through, but there are words that can help.

Penny Coles
The Local

Gail Kendall gets around on her walks with her dog Willow. Queenston residents will recognize the Jet Boat dock. The photo with the boardwalk was taken on a trek from Navy Hall to Fort Mississauga on a cold and windy day, the trail ending at the water, “where the green and very active lake meets the billowy, cloudy day,” says Kendall. The wintry orchard scene was taken from Concession 1.

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Letter writer Nancy Macri says not all grooming for small dogs, such as Pika, her best friend, is for aesthetic purposes. It can also be for health and wellness. (Nancy Macri)

Lord Mayor Betty Disero

This letter was written by Lord Mayor Betty Disero to the citizens of Niagara-on-the-Lake on Jan. 22, and distributed through social media and on the town’s website.

On behalf of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to the families and friends of our dear current and past mayor, John Groves. We share a love of this community, and he will be missed by many.

John was a civic leader who dedicated himself to the welfare of our community. He was a voice for the needs of our residents, a champion for the arts, and a driving force behind many initiatives that have shaped our town.

In particular, John was a strong advocate for the revitalization of the downtown. He worked tirelessly to attract new businesses and improve the public spaces, making Niagara-on-the-Lake a more vibrant and inviting place to live.

John was also a strong supporter of the arts. He was a founding member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Arts Council and a dedicated patron of the arts. He believed that the arts are an essential part of a healthy community and supported many organizations and events that promote the arts.

John was a true champion of our community. He always put the needs of our residents first and worked tirelessly to make Niagara-on-the-Lake a better place to live.

Our thoughts are with the Groves family and all of John’s friends and colleagues. We will miss him greatly and remember him with fondness and gratitude.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Mayor Betty Disero

LETTERS

Let’s hope NOTL reverses its decision

I am writing on behalf of the little creature in the photo. She is too cute to notice the little creature in the photo. I have relied on an excellent pet groomer in Virgil to do this specific work, though I brush and detangle twice daily. Due to the lockdown, the winter weather conditions and the provincial closure of pet grooming services, I suspect that many other dog owners like myself, a senior, are experiencing this burden of pet care.

I have written to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake asking why Niagara Falls and Grimsby are allowed to host pet grooming while we are not, spoken to the director of community & development services, the office of Wayne Gates, to my dog’s veterinarian and my pet groomer. It appears that the closure decision is subject to local interpretation as the provincial directives get handed down by the Ford administration in their discernment of what businesses ought to be open during this unprecedented time. I invite NOTLers to sign the petition that I have created at this link: http://chng.it/XqpvVLZT.

I recently sent in a letter to the editor of The Local. The topic was the availability and accessibility of our creeks and rivers, the general watershed areas of our community, that Owen Bujorgen writes about in his special reports to your paper.

Who says that the community leaders don’t listen? Within a week of the publication of my letter, staff were on site clearing the water right-of-ways at Four Mile Creek. Kudos to staff and the leadership for their initiative. I hope that the community appreciates their efforts on our behalf and thanks to staff that worked on resolving a potential problem. Let’s hope they continue in their efforts in clearing up our watershed by taking an inventory of its needs.

If anyone in the community notices “needs” in our community, I would strongly encourage you to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and express your concerns.

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Letters

LETTERS

Family moved by Moment of Silence

Our family is very moved that you covered and reported on the Moment of Silence by our council regarding Mike’s contributions to our town.

We all believe your reporting and your paper are such a voice and eyes on our community that make us all so much more aware of who we are and we are all the better for it.

As we reflected this morning, Mike was an integral ingredient in the recipe that makes Niagara such a wonderful place.

As always Penny, thank you for being an equally important factor in our Niagara experience and experience.

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John was a civic leader who dedicated himself to the welfare of our residents, a champion for the arts, and a driving force behind many initiatives that have shaped our town.

In particular, John was a strong advocate for the revitalization of the downtown. He worked tirelessly to attract new businesses and improve the public spaces, making Niagara-on-the-Lake a more vibrant and inviting place to live.

John was also a strong supporter of the arts. He was a founding member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Arts Council and a dedicated patron of the arts. He believed that the arts are an essential part of a healthy community and supported many organizations and events that promote the arts.

John was a true champion of our community. He always put the needs of our residents first and worked tirelessly to make Niagara-on-the-Lake a better place to live.

Our thoughts are with the Groves family and all of John’s friends and colleagues. We will miss him greatly and remember him with fondness and gratitude.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Mayor Betty Disero

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Celebrate Black history with a walk in the park

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

As the February “blahs” kick in, magnified as they are by the current state of emergency restrictions, now is the perfect time for a walking tour to celebrate Niagara-on-the-Lake’s rich Black history.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum is promoting the Voices of Freedom walking tour as part of its Black History Month resources and programming. Managing director and curator Sarah Kaufman reminds The Local that the museum was heavily involved in the development of the Voices of Freedom Park, the starting point of the tour.

“Our biggest contribution was in developing the Voices of Freedom walking tour app,” explains Kaufman. “People can go to vofpark.org and download the app, and go out and walk and learn more history, or if you’re not as tech-savvy, there’s a little pamphlet holder there that is protected from weather. They can pick up the pamphlet and walk around the community, get outdoors and learn about Black history.”

Indeed, the BaladoDiscovery app is full of interactive images of the stops along the way, accompanied by supporting documents from the museum’s collection of artifacts. As well, at many of the locations, audio clips voiced by local actors bring the participant into the stories of the time.

While standing at each location you are able to hear directly from those who were there at the time, such as Fanny Rowley, through diary and journal entries held by the museum.

Visitors and members services assistant Barbara Worthy wrote each of the vignettes. “It’s really an animated and interactive,” says Worthy. “You can read about each stop, or you can listen to the stories that bring the people and families alive. The whole thing is a tour, the vignettes, the related school program — was awarded the Governor General’s Award for Heritage Conservation, and that’s thanks to the support of the people in the town.”

During the month, Worthy will be posting to the museum’s website and social media her own one-minute clips of herself enjoying the tour. “I’ll just be talking very briefly into the camera about each location, little selfie clips of me doing an illustrated Voices of Freedom walking tour,” she says. Worthy will also be leading the Documentary Club discussion on Friday, Feb. 5. The club meets once a month on Friday mornings, talking about documentaries from the National Film Board, CBC and Historica Canada. This week’s discussion revolves around the story of Rose Fortune, the Harriet Tubman of the east coast.

Fortune was born into slavery in 1774, in the southern United States. Following the American Revolution, she and her family were owned by loyalists. In 1783, they sailed from New York City to Nova Scotia, where they eventually gained their freedom. Rose began a business transporting luggage in a wheelbarrow from the Annapolis ferry docks to hotels and houses. This became her cover, as she began using that wheelbarrow to help former slaves escape to freedom.

“She was one of those people who just did what had to be done, and kept her profile low, but what she did was really important,” says Worthy. “She never looked back. She saw a need, and she filled that need. She also broke through gender roles and knew how to work the system. People respected her for who she was and what she did.”

Friday’s meeting will be held using Zoom. Worthy says there are about a dozen members of the club, but you don’t have to be a member to join in on the discussion. This year’s series focuses a bit on women, with a documentary about Canada’s first female Member of Parliament, Agnes Macphail being featured on March 5. The documentaries are all free to watch, and Worthy promises a lively, open-ended discussion.

Kaufman points out that virtual events such as the Documentary Club are important these days, while it is impossible for the museum to be open to the public. For Black History Month, she encourages people to visit a virtual exhibit of Black history and culture that is available through the museum’s website.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake really does have a unique Black history compared to other communities,” says Kaufman. “One of the big reasons is that the Act to Limit Slavery was passed here in July 1793. That’s a huge part of Black history. It’s the first time in the British Empire that slavery was abolished in some form. It was sort of a phased-in approach, but it was a huge leap.”

Kaufman also stresses the importance of the Covented Corps, the all-Black corps that fought in the War of 1812 and also helped to build Fort Mississauga. The Moseby Affair is another significant event.

“Niagara was the county seat at the time,” Kaufman explains. “Solomon Moseby was a slave who escaped to Canada. His master charged him with theft because he stole a horse to escape. He found Moseby in Canada, and they had a trial to extradite him back to the States. While he was in the jail, there was a huge riot outside supporting Moseby, mostly Black women and some white allies trying to stop the extradition. Solomon ended up escaping and leaving.”

The Solomon Affair, as it is often referred to, eventually resulted in Canada banning the extradition of former slaves back to the United States.

As descendants of slaves and Black loyalists put down roots in town, they owned barber shops and livery stables, were carpenters and farmers and became involved in the community.

In 1874, John Waters was elected as the first Black councillor in town, serving two terms amongst an otherwise all-white council. The online exhibit features documents and images of all of these stories and more that bring to light the rich Black history of the area.

Looking to the future, both Kaufman and Worthy are hoping to soon access government funding to add to the online offerings.

“We have a few mini-documents that we have on our YouTube,” says Kaufman. “We’re trying to work toward doing one for Black history as well. It’s really quite significant for a small town like Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

All of the museum’s Black history activities and events can be accessed through their website at http://www.nhsm.ca.
being left on the table, going back many years, from the province, and possibly from the region as well, which has an option to contribute.

The audit committee had not recommended the inclusion of a heritage tax rebate, instead adding $25,000 more to the existing grant program to allow for building facade maintenance.

Although there were details to be worked out, Coun. Erwin Wiers was the only one against the rebate being included in the 2021 budget, opposed to having a major decision “put together on the fly tonight,” in response to a decision “put together on the fly tonight, “ in response to a decision “put together on the fly tonight,” in response to a decision “put together on the fly tonight.”

Cameron to reduce the discretionary grants from a total of $100,000 to zero was recommended by the audit committee, as well as the percentage of the rebate, which can be up to 40 per cent, the province will kick in a greater amount, according to the town’s contribution.

A motion by Coun. Clare Cameron to reduce the discretionary grants from a total of $100,000 to zero was approved by Coun. Gary Burroughs and Coun. Wendy Chernopass opposed.

For a short YouTube video explaining the town’s budget, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O619Ba0l5jk&feature=youtu.be

Continued from page 1

The number of people being hospitalized with COVID is declining, and the number of deaths should come down accordingly, he says, hopefully beginning this week.

Although there are still a large number of outbreaks in hospitals and long-term care homes, the number of cases in those situations is also decreasing as more are resolved, he said.

In Niagara Long Term Care on Wellington Street, there are still 19 residents in the home testing positive, down from 74 at its highest, but sadly, the number of deaths has increased to 11. There are six staff members still considered positive.

The numbers in long-term care and retirement homes across the region reflect what is happening in the community, which is to be expected, says Hirji, and also may already be a result of the first vaccinations.

Niagara was expecting enough vaccine to give residents of long-term care and retirement homes their second doses this week, he says, but there is still not enough vaccine for staff.

Vaccinations are ready to roll out as soon as more vaccine arrives, now going to a temporary location an arena floor in St. Catharines. Public Health is also involved with discussions about potential sites in each of the municipalities, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, and in many cases, arenas present the ideal location. They have always been a consideration for mass vaccination sites, he says, because the number of people who can go through in a day.

Public health is looking at long-term locations, added, assuming that COVID vaccinations could require booster doses, and possibly new vaccines for variants, as with annual flu shots.

There is also a possibility that arrival of the Moderna vaccine, which is easier to store, is not too far off. It means doses can be stored in the public health building, and in primary care clinics and pharmacies around the region.

It will be a bit more flexible, and helpful, says Hirji.

“Right now, we’ll take what we can get and make it work.”

Although national sur- veys are showing a discouraging 50 per cent of people don’t want the vaccine, the good news is 50 per cent do, says not a bad achieve- ment when only 20 to 25 per cent of the population is willing to be vaccinated against influenza.

The hope is as this plays out, as more people get the vaccine, and don’t report adverse reactions, others will begin to have confidence in it. They also might see it as the way to get out of pandemic restrictions and back to normal, says Hirji.

“Going forward, he says, all levels of government will be working toward building trust and encouraging people to decide in favour of being vaccinated.
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WE ARE OPEN
Grower better prepared for business during pandemic

Penny Coles
The Local

Ron van der Zalm, one of the owners of Colonial Florists family business, is anticipating a good spring.

That was not the case last year, as Niagara-on-the-Lake’s many successful family greenhouse businesses were suddenly threatened by the arrival of COVID-19.

What had been a thriving local industry was struggling on two levels, waiting and hoping essential seasonal workers would be allowed into the country, to help them as they geared up to their traditional peak season, and then learning that many orders were cancelled.

Thankfully, says van der Zalm, the second-generation grower now working with the third generation, he is anticipating this year to be different.

“We’ve been through it. We’re not being caught off-guard, and we’re prepared for it,” he says. “We know how to handle it.”

Last year, growers scrambled to sell what they could, many at road-side stands that locally quick and enthusiastically supported.

For Colonial, which sells rooted cuttings to other greenhouses to grow on, and also wholesale, flower growing annuals, geraniums, herbs, succulents and house plants, May is their key month for sales, but the busy planting time leading up to that is now.

Last year, van der Zalm says, he had orders cancelled, with greenhouses and garden centres unsure what to expect.

This year, van der Zalm says, other growers will also have a better idea of what to expect.

Some, especially those with cut flower and Easter plants, may be building on the success of those road-side stands, and many growers and garden centres have learned to promote their products on their websites and through social media, and sell online.

“Last year, sales for March and April were terrible, and we had to dump a lot of products. But May turned out pretty good. That saved us.”

Flowers, he says, “go hand-in-hand with gardening, landscaping, and other attempts to beautify your homes.” Many people staying at home with time on their hands during the first lock-down last spring got into home improvements in a way they hadn’t before, helping with sales of flowers and plants.

“We dodged a bullet last year. The bottom line wasn’t the same, but it wasn’t the disaster it could have been.”

With greenhouses on Broadway Avenue in the Port Weller area, and on Concession 7, van der Zalm says learning to sell flowers during a pandemic, as rules changed “day by day, week by week,” was a challenge, but one take-away from last spring, “is there will always be curbside. Growers are now set up for it, and people will continue to buy flowers that way.”

Although some of the third-generation kids sold a few plants curbside for Colonial, he didn’t push it, instead focusing on his wholesale customers. But many of them, local garden centres and other greenhouses, benefited from curbside sales. He doesn’t intend to try it this year, but others are in a good position to repeat that success, he says.

Inside the Colonial greenhouses, much has evolved from last year. “Everyone has to do so much more. There is still a lot of risk. Our employees are always sanitizing, we’re offsetting our lunch times, and two people sit at a table for six. It’s a totally different environment.”

Where people plant on lines, there is Plexiglass between them, he says, and there is Plexiglass between beds where the offshore workers sleep.

The first wave of offshore workers came in early January to work in greenhouses. They spent their two weeks quarantining, and since mid-January, have been able to work, says van der Zalm.

Colonial’s offshore workers come from Mexico, and most without issues. They need two negative COVID tests before they leave their home country, one before they can make plane reservations, and then a second two days before departure.

Although some of the current travel restrictions don’t apply to essential workers, says van der Zalm, those who haven’t left yet are finding it harder to get flights, because many have been cancelled.

He has had two of his 31 workers who was expecting to be here by now unable to travel due to insufficient paperwork, and another two because of positive test results.

In past years, stand-by workers would be waiting at the airport, willing and anxious to replace anyone who couldn’t travel, but that was not the case this year, with the extra steps required of them. Colonial is trying to replace them with local agency workers, also not a great solution, with some concern for the extra risk.

The Mexican workers who arrive must quarantine for two weeks, and those who travel in the same group can quarantine together.

If groups arrive a few days apart, they require different accommodations. That means spreading them out, or if necessary, renting space from other farmers, or putting them up in hotels, he says.

While the offshore workers are in quarantine, he has one employee who takes their shopping lists, and orders online. After his son picks up the orders, he sorts them out.

Once the offshore workers finish the quarantine, a small bus takes four people at a time to shop. Until that time, they are not able to leave the premises.

“They were going stir crazy, watching Netflix and playing video games. They are really anxious to get to work. ‘They want to work,” he says.

It’s mentally exhausting, but we can still work. There are other businesses that are shut down, and that’s much worse. This is a lot of work, but we’re keeping our business moving along.”

At this point, peak time for the greenhouse, he has 75 people employed, including the 31 offshore workers, which may only be 27 this year, “and we haven’t had any issues. Everyone is very respectful of the rules. We have frequent meetings to talk about COVID, and everybody is doing their part. Last year was hard, with so many fears. We all feel a lot better about it this year.”

Van der Zalm adds, “we thank them all the same for being here. We need them to get through this with us.”

However, with the number of cases in the community, “we know we can’t let down our guard. We take things day by day. We feel like we’re doing our part, and we can get through this together.”
Alternate side parking, alternate days suggested

Continued from page 1

one of the streets in Niagara-on-the-Green which has seen repeated ticketing. Having lived in cities where parking is allowed on alternate sides of the street, allowing plowing on both sides, he sees it as a pretty simple solution. “I’d like to see parking on one side, as in his neighbour- hood, permits snow plows to make one pass, on one side.”

“This is the way you can help us,” he says to the town, knowing that parking has been a problem in the subdivision since its earli- est days. “Alternate parking is easy to do. All it takes is street signage.”

On a recent snowy morning, he counted 37 cars which were ticketed, in about 25 minutes.

Katie Figiomeni and her husband bought their house on Young Street in Niagara-on-the-Green when they had just two cars. Today, their two chil- dren are driving, to col- lege and university, and are home this winter, studying online because of the pan- demic. Cars in her family get parked on the street.

They get tickets, al- though she managed to move one car just in time to avoid a ticket early one morning last week, before she left for work.

She understands snow-clearing regulations, although she says the snow plow only ever makes one pass down the subdivision roads. On the town’s website, under frequently-asked questions about snow plowing, it answers why only one side of the street gets plowed. “Residential roads are plowed to centre bare condition, meaning the plow will create one lane for vehicular traffic.”

She also knows there is a 12-hour parking limit, and has been told by bylaw offi- cers when they ticket that they are responding to complaints. “But they know full well there is nowhere else for us to park. I’m so frustrated. I told my husband I’m done with Niagara-on-the-Lake. We’re going to move this summer. And it all boils down to parking.”

Steve Hardaker, long- time member and vice-chair of the Glendale Task Force, recognizes that parking has long been and continues to be a divisive issue in the neigh- bourhood. “People either want more enforce- ment, or no enforcement at all,” he says.

The enforcement of pro- hibiting parking during a snowfall “has become an irritation,” he says. Bylaw enforce- ment was in the neigh- bourhood earlier this week, ticketing during snow clear- ing operations. Not every illegally parked vehicle was tagged,” he says. One neighbour who talked to an enforcement offi- cer said they were focused on cars illegally parked because of the length of time without being moved, and were also on the street during snow clearing. “That irritated some because it appeared enforcement was randomly ticketing.”

The Glendale Task Force has not met since last March, when pandemic restrictions were initiated, he says. But when they do meet, “parking is a standing agenda item.”

“Many people are good reasons to restrict street parking during snow clearing operations. If the plow cannot clear the snow curb to curb, it can become a safety issue for emergency vehicles and for school buses. That is the basic reason for the restric- tion,” he says.

And it’s not a Niagara- on-the-Green issue alone, he adds. Street park- ing restrictions for snow clearing exist in municipal- ities across the province. “Thankfully, we do not get many storms that war- rant snow clearing.”

Plows leaving snow be- side parked cars and in front of driveways is an irritant to home owners, he adds.

Homes with single driveways and sidewalks that leave room for only one car, garages used for storage rather than parking, student rentals, multiple resident rentals and households with several cars all add to the problem, says Hardaker.

“We have a two-car gar- age and four parking spots on our driveway. We have offered temporary park- ing in our driveway during snow clearing. That offer has only been accepted twice in the last two years.”

A number of years ago, residents of the first phase of the subdivision, from Niagara-on-the-Green Blvd. east to Glendale, voted on a per- mit system that would allow one parking spot on the street for the person who purchased the permit. “This was to discourage stu- dents from parking in the neighbourhood rather than purchasing a pass to park at the college,” but it didn’t alleviate the requirement for no parking during snow clearing, he says.

It’s not an easy issue to resolve, says Hardaker. In 2019, members of the task force met with the Royal Niagara Golf Club manag- er about using its parking lot during snow clearing operations, but issues such as liability insurance were problematic, he says. “Peo- ple generally liked the idea, but balked at having to buy a parking permit to help off- set the costs.” The idea died.

During the approval process for Phase 3 several years ago, members of the Glendale Task Force warned that too many townhouses would lead to parking is- sues, Hardaker recalls. “The town chose not to heed those warnings. Phase 3 is mostly townhouses.”

Between Dec. 26, and Jan. 29, when St-Jean says he received three tickets, the town bylaw department says 102 tickets were issued in Niagara-on-the-Green. Three were for parking for longer than 12 hours, 84 for parking “in such a manner as to interfere,” and 15 for obstructing fire hydrants, left wheels to curbs and parking in a prohibited area.

As to a solution for resi- dents who have small gar- ages and few cars, and one-car driveways, the situa- tion for many of the Ni-agara-on-the-Green home- owners, the town says, is that “residents are required to adhere to the regulations identified in the bylaw.”

Coun. Norm Arsenault, the town’s representative on the Glendale Task Force, says residents should un- derstand the parking re- strictions by now — they’re not new, and they are not just for Glendale. He agrees parking has been an ongo- ing problem in the subdivi- sion, and the task force has looked for solutions, but so far, found nothing that works.

When the subdivision was approved by the town it met all provincial poli- cies, including parking al- lotment, he adds. One of the contributing issues is that many residents choose not to use their garages for parking one of their vehi- cles. If they did, that would take about 200 cars off the streets, he estimates.

Arsenault sees this as a problem created by our love of cars, in part a result of in- adequate transit systems. “This is the nature of the beast. There are so many small cars, and large cars. Last year we had a similar issue in Cannery Park in St. Da- vids. We’re squeezing more people into smaller spaces, with less room for parking.”

Alternate side parking of the street parking is a solution worth considering, he says, adding it would bring it up to the town CAO and oper- ating manager.

Niagara-on-the-Green resident Daniel St-Jean took a photo of Keith Street in the subdivision after a recent snowfall, and the snow plow’s customary pass down the street. If it intends a curb-to-curb clearing, the town could institute an alternate side, alternate day parking regulation, he suggested.

The Ciara-on-Green resident resident Daniel St-Jean took a photo of Keith Street in the subdivision after a recent snowfall, and the snow plow’s customary pass down the street. If it intends a curb-to-curb clearing, the town could institute an alternate side, alternate day parking regulation, he suggested.
Mike Balsom Special to The Local

While leafing through a copy of Jetset Magazine, Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Lisa Jeffrey stumbled upon a promotion for a contest to appear on the cover of the publication. The prospect of being featured in the exclusive quarterly appealed to her, but the all-cost issue was really the chance to help a child's charity through her entry.

"I went online and began to look into it," Jeffrey, the owner of a small business, says, "and I learned a little about the Be Positive (B+) Foundation, a charity for kids with cancer. They help with financial assistance to families and for research. I wanted to do something to help out, so I entered it."

The Andrew McDonough B+ Foundation honours the memory of the 14-year-old Wilmington, Delaware boy who battled leukemia, septic shock and complications of childhood cancer for more than five months before passing away in 2005. B+ blood type became his family's and friends' motto throughout his fight against childhood cancer – “Be Positive.”

Since its inception, the foundation has become the largest provider of financial assistance to families of kids with cancer in the United States. As part of the magazine's contest, a free vote can be placed daily, but additional votes can be purchased for a dollar, with a portion of the proceeds going to the B+ Foundation.

Jeffrey is competing with women from all over the world for a chance to grace the cover, appear in a pictorial inside the magazine, and to have her entry considered the winner. Last year millions of votes were cast in the contest, before US Navy officer and California native Jeffrey Burns was chosen as the winner.

Since the contest began Jan. 5, Jeffrey has captured first place in her group through the first three rounds. In the current and last of the opening rounds, only the leader in her group will move on to the quarter-finals, which will be announced on Feb. 5. At press time, she was still holding onto the top spot.

"I've been number one (in her group) since day two," Jeffrey says. "The support that I have had has been from people in the community that know me, knowing that it's a good cause, and knowing what I stand for, wanting to help wherever I can.

That desire to help out has been a constant in Jeffrey's life, instilled by her parents while growing up on Anne Street. After graduating from Niagara District Secondary School, she enrolled in the EMT program at Niagara College, just outside of Toronto. While in Detroit in September, 2001, to offer her services as an emergency responder, Jeffrey decided to make her way to New York City to offer her services as a volunteer at Ground Zero.

She was one of the first Canadians on site.

"They were calling for EMT and medical help, so I went down there," remembers Jeffrey. "They sent me on 911 calls for the city of New York; they had me working 16 hours a day. It was before FEMA had set their feet down there. The first IV I ever started was there, on a police officer who had collapsed from exhaustion."

Over the course of 10 days, Jeffrey offered her support to the crews working through the rubble. The experience stays with her today, and despite the devastation, she is able to reflect in a positive way.

"It was a really tough few months," she says. "With COVID, our family has only been able to see her one at a time. She still has a long road to go, but she's out of the coma and stable. My father goes every day. They just celebrated 54 years of marriage in June."

Another tragedy closer to home has affected Jeffrey recently. For the past five months, she has been helping out her mother, Glenda, who cracked her skull after a fall on Thanksgiving weekend. She needed emergency brain surgery to relieve the bleeding, and was in a coma just after Christmas.

"It's been a really tough few months," Jeffrey says. "With COVID, our family has only been able to see her one at a time. She still has a long road to go, but she's out of the coma and stable. My father goes every day. They just celebrated 54 years of marriage in June."

Undoubtedly, her mother's struggle has also changed Jeffrey's outlook on life. "I believe life is very fragile, and each and every day is a gift we must embrace," she says in her profile on the magazine's website. "My faith gets me through all the storms of life."

If she ends up on the cover of Jetset Magazine, the cat-lover vows to use some of her winnings to help save an endangered species. She plans to travel to Namibia to help with the Cheetah Conservation Fund, a research and lobby institution involved in the study and preservation of the country's cheetah population.

She says she would also invest her winnings in helping others in need to make a difference in the world.

The winner of the Miss Jetset Magazine contest will be announced on Feb. 25. Voting for the current round ends at 9 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4. To vote for Lisa Jeffrey, visit https://miss.jetsetmag.com/2021/lisa-jeffrey

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Be Positive Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website https://www.auchterlonieastrology.com.

Thursday, Feb. 4: The third-quarter Moon in Scorpio occurs at 12:36 p.m. With the futuristic Sun in Aquarius cornered by secretive, sexy emotions, it’s a day when we want to hold on to our beliefs, our memories and our imaginations, to help us get through it. Mark Zuckerberg, sitting in his dormitory room at Harvard University, launched Facebook on Feb. 4, 2004.

Sunday, Feb. 7: Mercury and the Moon are friendly today, making thoughts and feelings work together. Mind you, Mercury is retrograde, so the thoughts may have more to do with memories, rather than new ideas.

Basketball’s Most Valuable Player in 2005 and 2006, Canada’s Steve Nash, was born Feb. 7, 1974.

Monday, Feb. 8: The Sun and Mercury are conjunct at 8:47 a.m., with Mercury in retrograde motion. It’s a time when rethinking something personal can prove to be very rewarding. It was Feb. 8, 1894, that Billy Bishop was born in Owen Sound. He went on to be a decorated pilot in the First World War, and today the Toronto Island airport is named the Billy Bishop Airport, with daily flights to and from Niagra-on-the-Lake.
February’s Heart Month is here!

We know this year is different but here are three great reasons to join Canadians across the country raising funds for research and advocacy, fighting heart disease and stroke.

1. Every five minutes, someone in this country dies from heart disease, stroke and vascular cognitive impairment.
2. With the COVID-19 pandemic, donations – and funding for lifesaving research – have never been at greater risk. The need to treat these diseases is more urgent than ever – people with these conditions are at higher risk for complications, and death, if they contract COVID-19.
3. Your fundraising will have TRIPLE the impact in February! Canadian Pacific will triple match donations made this Heart Month!* So your fundraising efforts will have 3X the impact!

Donate now at www.heartandstroke.ca

*Canadian Pacific is matching donations up to $100,000 this February