

# Amherst Bee

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**NEWS** Page 2

Williamsville student a soloist at GBYO concert.

## Lawsuit filed challenging park

by **AMY WALLACE**  
Editor

A group of residents have filed a lawsuit challenging the State Environmental Quality Review findings for the proposed Amherst Central Park in an attempt to stop the proposed project from proceeding.

The group, Concerned Resident for Amherst Central Park, and its Chairperson William F. Wopperer, filed the lawsuit Jan. 17 in New York State Supreme Court against the Town of Amherst, the town board, planning board and Amherst Supervisor Brian Kulpa.

The group's suit includes Judith Ferraro, of Donna Lea Boulevard, Jennifer J. Snyder-Haas, of Fairways Boulevard and Wopperer, also of Fairways Boulevard, all of Williamsville. They are represented by Knauf Shaw LLP.

Ferraro, Snyder-Haas and Wopperer are residents that live in close proximity to the proposed park and the lawsuit cites how they would personally be negatively impacted by the project.

The suit alleges that the residents listed above

would be negatively impacted if the proposed Amherst Central Park, on 170 acres of land that formerly housed the Westwood Country Club, bordered by North Forest Road, Sheridan Drive and Maple Road, would be allowed to proceed.

According to the lawsuit, the group is seeking "annulment as illegal, arbitrary and capricious the approvals issued by the Town of Amherst, Amherst Town Board, Town of Amherst Planning Board, and Kulpa, in his official capacity as town supervisor, and the related adoption of a SEQRA Findings Statement by the town board dated Dec. 18, 2023, of the town's application for approval of an Amended Planned Unit Development pursuant to a Conceptual Development Plan (PUD Plan) for the Amherst Central Park and the acceptance by the town board of the accompanying draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement dated Oct. 12, 2023 and Final Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement dated Dec. 1, 2023 and filed Dec. 4, 2023."

The suit alleges that the SEQR for the PUD "failed to comply with the requirements of SE-

QRA, and was therefore unlawful, arbitrary, and capricious."

The suit also alleges that the SEQRA Review was "fatally flawed due to, a lack of viable, reasonable alternatives, inadequate consideration of traffic improvements and mitigation measures, and inadequate assessment of the brownfield remediation plan. That the town failed to comply with their affirmative substantive duty under SEQRA to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects to the maximum extent practicable and that the town failed to take a 'hard look' at a reasonable range of alternatives to the PUD Plan, which would have mitigated its significant environmental, economic and social impacts, including alternatives limited to passive recreation and alternatives that don't involve the relocation of the existing Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village Museum to the Central Park and the construction of an indoor 31,600-square-foot Community Theater Building in the Central Park without assessment of other locations for the Community Theater within the town."

(Continued on page six)

## New media developments in the works in the Sweet Home District

by **STEPHANIE ZAWADZKI**  
Reporter

Sweet Home Central School district is undergoing a brand upgrade that will include changes to its website and other publications. The district's newsletter, sent out six times a year to residents, will be replaced by a high gloss magazine, distributed three times a year. This new magazine will focus on showcasing stories about students, faculty, staff, alumni, and

community members.

During a presentation to the board of education on Jan. 9, Christine Slagle, district public relations coordinator, said the magazine is designed to be visually appealing and engaging. "It takes a deep dive into some of the great things that our students are doing, our staff, our community [and] our alumni. We're going to encompass everything. It's going to cover the entire district," she said.

While many parents, staff and alumni interact with the district online and on social media, the magazine is intended to reach those residents who don't regularly follow district news through these channels. "There are some folks that do not engage on social media and have no interest in doing so. We know that our parents and our students are seeing our district differently than perhaps a taxpayer who doesn't choose to look at our website or social media," Slagle said. "One of the great things about this

(Continued on page six)

## Study looks to help shape Main Street

by **AMY WALLACE**  
Editor

The Town of Amherst is asking for the public's help to tackle traffic and pedestrian issues along the Main Street corridor from Bailey Avenue through Eggertsville and Snyder.

Amherst associate planner Roberta Rappoccio said that a meeting held with residents regarding the mixed-use project at the former Squire Shop, at 4548-4564 Main St., brought up existing concerns with traffic.

"At that meeting, traffic and pedestrian issues were brought to our attention that had been ongoing for a while, like not hav-

ing enough time to cross the street," Rappoccio said.

Rappoccio said that the town partially got the idea to perform a Main Street Corridor Study from that meeting with residents and that the New York State Department of Transportation is planning to reconfigure the south exits and ramps from the I-290 to Main Street in the future.

"NYSDOT is currently developing options for potential reconfiguration of the Main Street interchange," Susan Surdej, regional public information officer for the DOT, said. "As we progress, we will coordinate with the Town of Amherst and will

(Continued on page six)

**WINTER WONDERLAND** – Residents throughout Amherst enjoyed the large amounts of snow the area saw last week and over the weekend. Pictured below is Kristie, the dog, with snow on her face after playing at Bassett Park on Jan. 15. At right, Sebastian, 5, plays in his backyard during the snow event.

Contributed photos

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### Bee Heard

✓ To Brian Kulpa, the Town of Amherst is a great place to live. Now I'm not so sure. I may have to sell my home due to this 11.4% property tax increase. I've paid my taxes for over 25 years. My street and the storm drains are in bad need of repaving and replacing. It's clear where taxpayer money is going. You are not looking out for us taxpayers and our properties. Your focus is elsewhere with the developers. Shame on you.

✓ Just drove through the area of the 990 and North French Road in – I believe it's a soccer complex, sits back in there, and also a street that pulls out from a subdivision. Let me tell you, that's all a traffic accident waiting to happen. Not only do you have heavy flows of traffic on North French Road, you also have at this time of day cars pulling out of the soccer complex and cars trying to come out from the subdivision. And this looks like a mass of headlights coming from all different directions. What is the accident rate right there by the soccer field at 5 o'clock in the afternoon? You have to keep your foot on the brake because you can never tell when somebody might misjudge and pull right out in front of you, which they did to me several months ago. I had to slam the brakes on. Yes, so that is a very dangerous spot there. What are you going to do, Kulpa? I suppose if you can't make money off it, you're not going to do anything.

✓ Cheektowaga had a 1% tax increase and Clarence had 0% tax increase as our outlying next door towns. There is no reason to have \$33,000,000 in new street lighting in one year. This could have been done over 15 to 20 years, with a payback of 65 years when the lights will only last 25 years is unconscionable to waste this amount of money. Brian Kulpa has no sense for budgeting, has no ethical compass, and is shoving a tax increase three times the state tax cap of 3.3%. Where are Gov. Kathy Hochul, Assemblywoman Karen McMahon, and state Sen. Sean Ryan when there's a state tax cap? Why aren't they screaming bloody murder that Brian Kulpa and his all-Democrat town board have tripled the state tax cap with an 11.4% property tax hike in one year? It's unethical, deceitful and cunning. Shame on you, Brian Kulpa.

✓ The Amherst Town Board can start looking at the 2025 budget and figure out the 11.4% decrease that'll put things back into normal perspective.

✓ I'm assessed at \$140,000, and my actual tax bill for county, town property taxes increased by \$275. Taxpayers should file lawsuits, pay under protest, and pay on the last day possible.

(Editor's note: Call 716-632-0390 to leave an anonymous one-minute Bee Heard comment. Callers may leave one comment per week, and the Bee will not publish comments substantially longer than one minute or containing derogatory or insulting comments. All comments are subject to editing. **The Bee Heard submission deadline is 5 p.m. Thursdays.**)

### Lawsuit (Continued from page one)

The suit also alleges that the SEQR limited the range of alternatives subjected to full review and public comment to just the PUD Plan and an expansive mixed use project that was found to be not protective of the environment under SEQR in 2017, essentially limiting the options to just the PUD Plan.

Concerns related to traffic, proximity to livestock to residences from the BNHV and that the Amherst Central Park Task Force was not involved in the PUD.

The lawsuit also alleges the proposed community theater, winter market and

museum do not comply with current zoning for the area.

"The Concerned Residents for Amherst Central Park represent local residents living near the proposed Amherst Central Park and advocate for the promise of an Amherst Central Park that is inspired by the values of Buffalo's Olmsted Parks, representing restorative green spaces that support people, respect nature and the environment, and provide opportunities to play, create, commune and discover," Dwight Kanyuk, attorney for the group, said. "The proposed Planned Unit Develop-

### New media (Continued from page one)

magazine is that it's going to go to every district resident."

In addition to the magazine, other developments in progress include a redesigned website scheduled for launch at the beginning of the 2024-25 school year.

"It's the first thing you see, and we want that to make a really good impression," she said. The district doesn't anticipate significant costs for the website redesign, as funds have already been allocated in their contract with the website hosting provid-

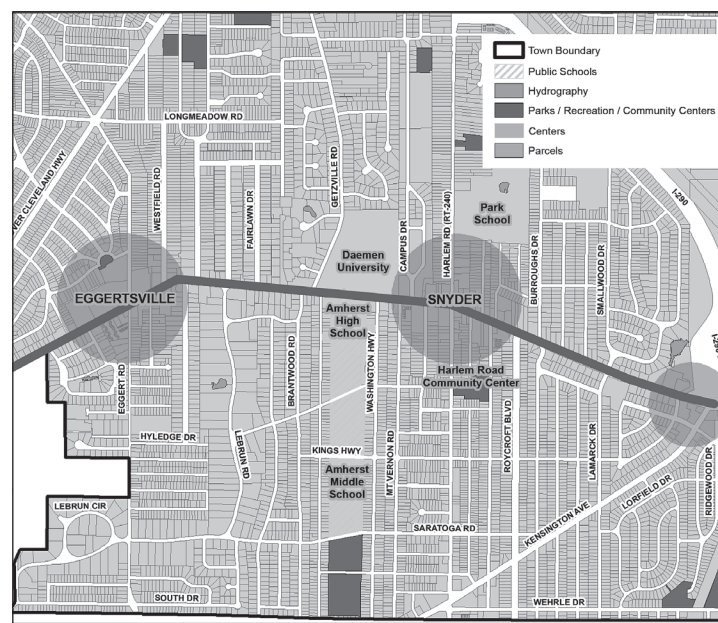
### Study looks (Continued from page one)

hold a public information meeting when we have more information to share."

Main Street is a major arterial roadway under the jurisdiction of the state DOT. It is one of the town's main east/west corridors that is used as a primary commuter route for people living both east and west of the Village of Williamsville, for neighboring communities, and for commerce from within and outside the region. During peak commuter times, traffic on Main Street can be congested, thus creating difficulty for both drivers and pedestrians using the corridor. This congestion can impede pedestrian circulation and parking along Main Street, adversely affecting the quality of life for residents and vitality for businesses.

Town planners kicked off the Main Street Corridor Planning Project Tuesday, Jan. 23, with a hands-on design workshop for residents and stakeholders to collect input to help create the vision that will guide future improvements.

This specific planning project will study the town's Main Street corridor between Bailey Avenue and I-290. At the workshop, Dover, Kohl and Partners and Creighton Manning Engineering, the town's planning consultants, along with the Planning Department, will lead a discussion exploring how to improve safety; in-



The above map shows the coverage area for the Main Street Corridor Study that is taking place in the Town of Amherst. The area to be studied for traffic and pedestrian patterns includes Main Street from the I-290 interchange to Bailey Avenue.

Contributed photo

crease mobility options; accommodate parking; and envision how future street design can support local businesses, corridor institutions and adjacent neighborhoods.

As part of this initial step in launching the Main Street Corridor Planning Project, open studio hours will be held from noon to 2 p.m. on both Wednesday, Jan. 24, and Thursday, Jan. 25, at the Harlem Road Community Center, Rooms 2 and 3. Beginning at noon, planning team representatives from Dover, Kohl and Partners and Creighton Manning Engineering will share brief

presentations on the topics of placemaking, street design and livable engineering. Afterward, attendees will have an opportunity to talk with the team, ask questions and share their ideas for Main Street.

"The first initial meeting, Dover, Kohl asked how you get around," Amy Groves of Dover, Kohl and Partners said. "Residents used interactive pieces to the design the street 'your way.'"

Groves said that by working with Creighton Manning Engineering, they learn from the community what they want and the engineers can say what is feasible.

"We are looking at all ways of using the corridor; bus, pedestrian, parking, biking," Rappoccio said.

The engineers will make drawings that can be then used for public feedback and to obtain potential grant funding to implement the project. The DOT would have to sign off on any plans because it is a state-owned road.

Anyone interested in attending is invited to meet the planning team and learn about best practices in street design, as well as local constraints and opportunities, participate in a group design activity and share ideas.

To visit the project page on the town's website, go to [www.amherst.ny.us](http://www.amherst.ny.us), follow the town's newsfeed, Track Us, for information. Any questions may be directed to Rappoccio at [rappoccio@amherst.ny.us](mailto:rappoccio@amherst.ny.us) or by calling 716-631-7071.

## SPCA issues winter pet safety tips to keep pets safe from the cold

With a series of winter storms and smaller work forces at many veterinary clinics, getting emergency veterinary care is a bit more complicated. Help pets stay safe and healthy with the following winter safety tips from the SPCA Serving Erie County.

- Outdoor animal shelter must be suitable for inclement weather. If it's not, animal welfare officers can rescue the pet even before he or she shows signs of suffering, thanks to New York state's Shelter Law that

went into effect in 2003. A legislative push in late 2018 led to stronger laws concerning the tethering of dogs within Buffalo city limits, and the SPCA and other law enforcement organizations can now take even more steps to ensure dogs are protected from the elements.

- Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Pets can lose their scent on snow and ice, especially if snow is falling at a fast rate, and

your pet can easily lose his sense of direction. Keep pets at home. Never leave your pet alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold. Your pet could literally freeze to death.

- Stray or neglected cats sometimes sleep under vehicles' hoods where it's warm and comfortable. Bang loudly on the hood and sides of the vehicle before turning on the ignition so they have a chance to

escape, otherwise they could be killed or seriously injured.

- Only take your dog outside for as long as it takes to relieve himself or herself.

- Antifreeze is lethal poison for dogs and cats, even in small doses. Be sure to clean up spills thoroughly, and consider switching to an animal-friendly antifreeze.

For more tips regarding keeping pets safe and healthy during the winter, contact your veterinarian.