

Lewiston leaders commend staffs, Wydysh for efforts during pandemic

Village to withhold water bill penalties

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

At a public safety briefing Monday morning, Village of Lewiston Mayor Anne Welch and Town of Lewiston Supervisor Steve Broderick provided updates on efforts to keep residents safe and financially stable as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

The conference call was hosted by Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce President Jennifer Pauly.

Welch admitted, "It's just a very trying and challenging time," as local brick-and-mortars remain closed to the public, and residents are safe at home to limit the coronavirus spread.

She explained, "Our offices are closed to the public. Our girls have been working from home, and they come in as needed, just to get some things in the office, or payroll, or something. And they are working from home. We are taking messages from people and getting back to them. We have the dropbox, which we have told everybody, if you need anything or want to drop off a payment or whatever, to use the dropbox."

"Also, the board and I discussed the April 1 water billing is coming out. We won't be charging any late charges if, in fact, the people don't pay on time. That's one thing we're hoping we can do for the public, for the residents."

With regard to the Department of Public Works, Welch said, "The guys are working with their half, 50% workload. But they are getting things done, and they're to

be commended, too, for staying out there and picking up everybody's garbage, and taking care of things.

"Very proud of our staff and our workers."

Construction Updates

Gov. Andrew Cuomo recently amended his list of nonessential workers to include construction crews not dealing with infrastructure or health and safety projects.

With the Lewiston waterfront renovation almost complete, and crews making steady progress toward the opening of Ellicott Development's plaza at Center, North Eighth and Onondaga streets, Welch said, "I'm really concerned about this whole construction thing."

"As you know, we have construction going on, and they've already had to lose workers – and it's just slowing everything down. So, I'm hoping that they can finish their construction," she said.

Village of Lewiston Building Inspector/Zoning Officer Ken Candella shared this note from the New York Construction Materials Association Inc.:

"Reacting to an onslaught of negative press, the governor has issued a new executive order, which dramatically restricts work on nonessential construction. The language below is taken directly from the new guidance and becomes effective today."

Section 9 – Construction

All non-essential construction must shut down except emergency construction, (e.g. a project necessary to protect health



Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh has been hosting a weekday afternoon update on LCTV.

and safety of the occupants, or to continue a project if it would be unsafe to allow to remain undone until it is safe to shut the site).

Essential construction may continue and includes roads, bridges, transit facilities, utilities, hospitals or health care facilities, affordable housing, and homeless shelters. At every site, if essential or emergency non-essential construction, this includes maintaining social distance, including for purposes of elevators/meals/entry and exit. Sites that cannot maintain distance and safety best practices must close and enforcement will be provided by the state in coordination with the city/local governments. This will include fines of up to \$10,000 per violation.

For purposes of this section construction work does not include a single worker, who is the

sole employee/worker on a job site.

The related website is <https://esd.ny.gov/guidance-executive-order-2026>.

Town of Lewiston Updates

Broderick said, "April 15 is the new (nonessential workforce safe at home) date, so we're going to remain closed at the Town Hall, at 50% staffing. (Town Clerk/Tax Receiver) Donna (Garfinkel) has done a great job, and the girls in the office have done a great job."

"If somebody needs something, we're not doing fishing licenses, things like that; we're not renewing dog licenses; nobody's gonna be coming out writing anybody up for those dog licenses. But I know we've needed to issue a couple of marriage licenses, some death certificates. So, if you call the Town Hall, there is a voice on the other end, and they will assist you. And it might be, 'Drop it in the mailbox and we'll put it through the door,' that type of contact, but we are still doing some forms in an emergency-type situation."

"Our town parks, if you drive around, you see that they're all roped off, the equipment. We had an issue in Sanborn, where a lot of kids were out there playing basketball. As of Friday, (Parks Superintendent) Mike Dashineau was going to try and get up there and take those rims down."

Broderick did note, however, "I

think people are doing a good job with the distancing."

He explained, "A lot of the decisions that we make at the town are kind of made for us through the county and the state. It's kind of a hurry up and wait-type thing, and any decision we try and make, it seems like it's made for us."

"We do have a public hearing on the 13th, as far as our map and plan for our water project, but, like the mayor said, with construction being at a standstill, we don't know what's going to happen there."

Broderick said the town is looking to host the meeting online.

"Other than that, our police department is still at 100%; our sewer plant is operating and those are two essentials," he said. "We're just kind of getting by, trying to get work done as we can. Again, the brush pickup, April 1 is the date for brush and leaves, but (Highway Superintendent) Dave (Trane's) at a 50% staff. They'll get to it when they can get to it. And I know a lot of people call and are complaining about it, but this is a situation that is unavoidable, that it's going to take a little bit longer to get those leaves and brush picked up."

Wydysh Commended

Welch gave credit to Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh, who has been working double-duty updating residents and the media on the regional effects of COVID-19.

"Being on the conference calls with Becky Wydysh has been great. She has really done a tremendous job for the county, and she continues to do so," Welch said. "I know she's working long hours, keeping everybody informed."

Wydysh also is hosting a 2 p.m. update each weekday on LCTV.

"I agree with the mayor: Becky Wydysh is doing a great job leading the county," Broderick said.

"We're in communication with her pretty much daily, too, so it's great to have her. She represents our region, and she does it well," Pauly said.

Niagara County: 90+ positive coronavirus cases

On Thursday, the Niagara County Health Department released the following update on positive COVID-19 cases in Niagara County:

- √ 26 new positive cases (total of 91 to date)
- √ 77 positive individuals in isolation
- √ 63 isolating at home
- √ 14 in hospital isolation
- √ 14 people have recovered

Updates can be found on the county's online "heat map."

On her LCTV update Thursday, Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh said, "We know that the numbers are higher than what's being reported, because we're just not doing the testing that we would like to be able to be doing right now."

Niagara County Public Health Director Daniel Stapleton said, "We continue to tell people it's highly contagious. That hasn't

changed; that's consistent. And so, we're telling people stay home; don't go out, unless you need to be out – and only if it's absolutely necessary."

He added, "My staff continue to work around the clock to make sure we're prepared, that we respond to these quickly."

Stapleton added, "We continue to see the highest number of cases where population density is high; Niagara Falls is leading right now with the highest number of cases at 23. But you look at places like the Town of Wheatfield has 19 cases, North Tonawanda 11, and so on."

Per the ever-changing "heat map," there have been four reported cases in the Town of Lewiston, two in the Town of Porter, and one each in the Town of Niagara and Village of Lewiston. As of this writing, there are no confirmed cases in Youngstown or Wilson.

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Please note: All fish fries are still available for takout and/or delivery. For more information, please call ahead of time.