

# Town of Niagara dissolves IDA; paves way for sale of Kmart Property

Police reform committee formed

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

On Tuesday, the Town of Niagara Board voted unanimously to dissolve the Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency (IDA). During last week's Town Board work session, Town Attorney Michael Risman explained the decision.

"It's not really cost effective for a town of our size to have an IDA with the limited number of uses we have for (it)," he said. "So we're allowed, as long as we wrap up all the affairs of the IDA, we can close it and turn the assets back to the town."

Supervisor Lee Wallace explained that, while the IDA had not done a project since 2014, the agency was still paying fees imposed on it by New York state. Wallace said that, in conversa-

tions with Mark Gabriel, attorney for the Town of Niagara IDA, Gabriel explained it would be "foolish" for the agency to stay in operation any longer.

According to a letter from IDA Chairman/CEO Gerald Hathaway, the IDA recently successfully assigned all of its remaining active projects to the Niagara County IDA. Hathaway's letter also outlined how the agency's remaining \$20,000 would be returned to the town.

"The Agency has been committed over the past 35 years to bring economic development and jobs to the Town of Niagara. As the Agency's final act in support of the Town of Niagara, we will be disbursing our remaining funds to the Town of Niagara, of which \$20,000 should be used to

fund the Town of Niagara Beautification Fund for the next five years, with the remaining balance to be used for Veteran's Memorial Park improvement projects. It has been an honor and a privilege for the Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency to serve the residents of the Town of Niagara," the letter stated.

Per the resolution, the funds will be deposited in the Town of Niagara beautification fund and the balance will be deposited first in the Town of Niagara Veteran's Memorial Park capital project account for any capital expenditures not covered by Greenway funding. The remaining balance will be deposited in a Town of Niagara infrastructure improvement capital project account.

## Kmart Plaza Update

The board also passed a resolution helping to pave the way for the sale of the former Kmart property located at 2590 Military Road. The resolution approved the proposed settlement of a pending tax assessment challenge lawsuit titled Niagara Realty NY, LLC and Granger Development & Brokerage Services, Inc. v. Town of Niagara. The proposed settlement reduces the assessment from \$2,635,000 assessed value to \$1,372,000 assessed value to reflect the current pending arms-length sale of the property for the sum of \$2,800,000.

During last week's Town Board work session, Risman explained that, while the resulting settlement would lower the buyer's tax bill, the town would be making "a

good business decision just to get rid of it quickly and facilitate the development over there." He also noted the town would have to incur significant costs for legal fees and appraisers if it wished to challenge the suit. He also noted the appraisal would likely increase as the property is developed.

The site has been vacant since Kmart closed three years ago in January.

The parcel is currently in talks to be sold to a Florida developer who wishes to turn the former building itself into an indoor storage facility while the rest of the 10.8-acre property would be subdivided for other uses.

## Police Reform

Elsewhere, per an executive order from Gov. Andrew Cuomo, the town passed a resolution establishing a police reform committee.

Local governments and police departments across the state were directed in June to form these committees to, "Address the tensions and lack of trust between our communities and the law enforcement that serves them," according to the governor's statements.

The committee is to serve retroactively from November 2020 through May 31, 2021. The names announced for the committee include: Lee S. Wallace, Town of Niagara supervisor, Amanda Haseley, Town of Niagara recreation director/educator, H. James Sutor, Town of Niagara Police chief; Lisa Baehre, Niagara County ADA; Pat Barney, Town of Niagara ZBA chairman; James Hagerty, Town of Niagara resident/Niagara Wheatfield educator; Kelly Aderman, Town of Niagara Police lieutenant; Gene Pucci, Town of Niagara resident; Brian Markovich, Town of Niagara resident; John Doran, Fashion Outlets Niagara USA manager; Johnny Parks, Town of Niagara resident; Craig Touma, Town of Niagara prosecuting attorney.

The Town of Niagara Town Hall will be closed Dec. 24 and 25 for the Christmas holiday and again Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 for the New Year's holiday.

The Town Board will hold its annual reorganization meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021.

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**We will be closed on Thursday, December 24th for the holidays and return on Monday, January 4th 2021**  
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