

Leaders embrace 2022, looking out for residents

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Destination Niagara USA President & CEO John Percy

Niagara Falls USA fared better than many other destinations across the country during the pandemic, thanks to having such a strong drive market and so many wonderful outdoor attractions with wide-open spaces.

Industry research shows that consumer confidence in travel remains very high, with nine in 10 American travelers planning a trip in the next six months. National hotel data has also shown that room demand fully recovered back to 2019 levels this past December.

We are hard at work on the launch of our 2022 Niagara Falls USA Travel Guide, as well as all of our digital marketing programs for the year. We are feeling cautiously optimistic for a strong rebound in 2022 and beyond!

Town of Lewiston Supervisor Steve Broderick

The last two years have been trying times for all of us, and hopefully the worst of it has passed. In 2022, I see an incredible amount of hope that things will be better. Several of our festivals that haven't occurred in those two years are scheduled, and appear to be bigger than ever. The Town and Village of Lewiston are celebrating our 200-year bicentennial, which will include the largest fireworks display our community has ever seen, along with a July 2 performance of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra at Academy Park. The Sanborn Farm Museum in once again hosting their annual Farm Festival on July 23 and 24, along with several other events.

The Town of Lewiston will be continuing its successful summer recreation and baseball programs, along with several new programs. Our adult swim program, which has been canceled the last two years, is a top priority for 2022. I feel that it is tremendously important to get our children and adults active in outside recreation, as we all know what it felt like to be cooped up inside for far too long.

I personally am looking forward to 2022 and believe it will be a year to get back out and enjoy the community we all love.

Town of Wheatfield Supervisor Don MacSwan

The past year has been another challenging year with the COVID pandemic still affecting us all! Let's hope and pray for a better 2022 and that our lives return to some normalcy.

Continuing progress has been made on our Veterans Memorial behind Town Hall. Concrete flooring is complete, and dedicated benches have been added to the perimeter. We had our formal



dedication this past summer with a large attendance of dignitaries, veterans and Wheatfield residents.

The long-awaited NYSDOT project on Niagara Falls Boulevard is still on schedule for bid openings and a start up in 2022, with completion scheduled for 2023. This, of course, includes turning lanes in all directions at Ward and Niagara Falls Boulevard, and the realignment of Witmer Road and the Oppenheim Park entrance. Thank you to our Boulevard Enhancement Volunteers for their efforts in obtaining permission from NYSDOT to secure an LED "Wheatfield" sign to be mounted on our existing decorative wall at Nash Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard.

The Town Highway Department paved approximately seven miles of blacktop this summer as well as rebuilding Stoelting Street in Bergholz. In addition, numerous drainage projects were addressed.

The Town of Wheatfield is getting back to normal, with plans to proceed with a full schedule of recreation activities to include senior activities, the town picnic and a full slate of baseball and softball.

Our town constable department received a surplus 2019 Dodge Charger from the Niagara County Sheriff's Office, keeping our current fleet up to a high standard.

We are still working on the next phase of the Greenway Trail, which will connect North Tonawanda with Wheatfield and Niagara Falls. A review of an alternate route is scheduled for the spring of 2022.

As the result of a rebound in the economy in 2021 from the

COVID-19 pandemic, and an increase in the town's population resulting from the 2020 census, the town has received a substantial increase of over 20% in its sales tax revenues for 2021 when compared to 2020. The result is that the town did not have to dip into its fund balance (surplus) in 2021, and the town continues to be in a strong financial position at the end of 2021. However, because of the recent omicron variant and the potential emergence of other COVID-19 variants in the future, the town will continue to be diligent in all of its financial matters.

The Town of Wheatfield's total outstanding debt is at its lowest level for the past 10 years. The total outstanding debt at the end of 2021 is slightly over \$3.5 million, while at the end of 2011 it was slightly over \$12.8 million – a reduction of over 72%. This is another indication of the town's strong financial position.

During the early part of 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to respond to the public health emergency and the negative economic impacts that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of this act, all states and local governments in the United States have received an ARPA grant. The amount of the ARPA grant awarded to the Town of Wheatfield was \$1,851,584, with one-half (or \$925,792) received in 2021 and the other half to be received in 2022. There are certain rules and regulations that must be followed with this grant, but for the Town of Wheatfield, these funds can be used for general



government services with very few exceptions. The Town Board, along with all of the department heads, are currently in the process of compiling and prioritizing a list of needed projects to finance with these funds.

A special thanks to Dan Casacci from Sun Beam Labs for donating 60 cases of hand sanitizer for distribution to Wheatfield residents.

In closing, COVID has changed just about everything in our lives, from the way we shop to the way we worship, and our day-to-day

interaction with friends and relatives. As Americans, we can stand tall and we will endure these difficult times. Every day passed is a day closer to the end of this pandemic.

In closing, once again I want to thank all of our employees for their service, working long hours to provide service to our residents. I also want to thank our residents for their patience and endurance through these difficult times. Stay safe, stay healthy, and God bless.

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First woman to assume command of Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station

The 914th Air Refueling Wing will welcome its new wing commander, Col. Lara B. Morrison, during an assumption of command ceremony scheduled at the base on Saturday.

Morrison will assume command of the unit's approximately 1,600 military and civilian member force and eight assigned KC-135R Stratotanker refueling aircraft. She will be the first female wing and installation commander in the unit's history, dating back to 1971.

Morrison's previous assignment was as commander of the 452nd Operations Group, March Air Reserve Base, California, where the unit is equipped with C-17A Globemaster, KC-135R, and soon to host the KC-46A Pegasus aircraft.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey T. Pennington, commander, 4th Air Force, Air Force Reserve Command, who is responsible for providing oversight to 18 flying wings across the country, will preside over the ceremony.