

Tesla monument proposed for Gratwick Park

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

During Tuesday's Common Council work session, members of the nonprofit Buffalo Niagara Nikola Tesla Council Inc. (BNNTC) proposed a plan to gift the City of North Tonawanda with an art structure meant to pay homage to famous scientist and inventor Nikola Tesla.

Dubbed the "Tesla Coil in the Park," the plan would erect a stainless steel art structure at Gratwick-Riverside park, symbolizing one of Tesla's most significant and iconic inventions: the Tesla Coil – a high-frequency alternating-current transformer capable of creating high voltage at low current.

Speaking on the proposal, BNNTC members Paul Swisher and Stephen Lesting said the group is envisioning a "Nikola Tesla Legacy Corridor," which would extend from Niagara Falls (which features a large statue of Tesla overlooking the falls) to Buffalo, where a new Tesla statue donated by the group in September now stands. Located on the corner of Main and North Division streets, the area where the new statue resides was designated Nikola Tesla Park by the City of Buffalo Common Council and will be the first and only

park named in honor of Tesla in the U.S.

Swisher highlighted the oft-forgotten significance of North Tonawanda during Western New York's pioneering time as an electrical and scientific marvel of the world. Beginning in 1896, electricity generated by Niagara Falls was at one point sent to a switch station in North Tonawanda before being transmitted to Buffalo. The ability to utilize alternating current was a scientific revelation, and helped, at least for a time, to turn Western New York into, "One of the greatest industrial centers of the globe," according to Tesla himself.

The proposed Gratwick Park site was chosen due to its proximity to the old switching station, which still stands, preserved as a historical landmark, on the corner of Robinson Street and the Twin City Memorial Parkway.

Lesting said the BNNTC's mission is to, "Pay homage to Nikola Tesla by imparting long-overdue educational awareness of his contributions to our civilization."

"We believe that our art structure will be eminently relevant to the life and legacy of Dr. Tesla. We are certain that the 'Tesla Coil in the Park' in Gratwick



Above: The Tesla coil (Photo credit: Buffalo Niagara Nikola Tesla Council Inc.) • At right: An artist's rendering of a proposed "Tesla Coil in the Park," which would highlight NT's significance in Nikola Tesla's efforts to industrialize electricity.



Riverside Park will attract visitors and tourists and will provide both edification and education, as well as a place for sitting to relax for a while," Lesting said.

Swisher noted the group is currently at "ground zero" of its planning phase and will be working with city officials along with Parks Director Alex Domaradzki to determine if the proposed lo-

cation would be suitable.

Although nothing was set in stone, Council President Robert Pecoraro expressed an eagerness to move forward with the project

"I think we're all pretty much in agreement that we all want to see this happen and we will be there to support you each step of the way," Pecoraro said.

NT: AIM funding should be restored

From the Office of Mayor Arthur Pappas:

There has been some confusion and misinformation out there regarding the AIM funding for the city. Here are the bullet points regarding AIM funding and the steps we took as a city:

Background: Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) funding is the unrestricted state aid that cities and villages in New York receive from the state, and such aid is distributed annually via the state budget. This year, Gov. Cuomo proposed a cut in AIM funding to municipalities in Niagara County by \$1,709,462. Specifically, North Tonawanda's funding is to be cut from FY21 enacted budget of \$4,335,111 (does not include the impact of withholdings during the year) to \$3,468,089, a decrease of \$867,022.

The governor's proposed budget presents "The Budget equitably reduces the amount of Aid

and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) for cities in New York State based on their reliance, calculated as a percentage of the total city budget. Payments will be reduced by 2.5 percent for those cities with the highest reliance on AIM, and up to 20 percent for those who have the least reliance."

North Tonawanda approved a FY2021 budget that, if altered negatively, will drive potential cuts in services and personnel and impact resident's quality of life. This could include all departments – including health and safety, which impacts police and fire. Therefore, the NYS government must reconsider the governor's current budget proposal of these drastic reductions to the North Tonawanda's AIM funding.

As far as the action we took as a city:

Teleconference with Assemblyman William Conrad's office on

Jan. 28, requesting our assistance with letters of support with North Tonawanda associations based on Gov. Cuomo's proposed cuts to North Tonawanda's AIM funding. There was never a discussion of a missed file report. We followed up this discussion speaking directly to Sen. Rob Ort and Assemblyman Angelo Morinello.

Council President Robert Pecoraro filed a late communication Common Council resolution on Feb. 2, requesting the city clerk forward a certified copy of this resolution to the governor and all of our state representatives. This resolution passed unanimously. In addition, the resolution requested the mayor invite the North Tonawanda Police Benevolent Association (PBA) to write the NYS PBA; the North Tonawanda Fire Department to write to Fireman's Association of the State of NY (FASNY); employees associated

with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Civil Service Employee Association (CSEA), and the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) write to their state representatives. These letters have

been submitted. Final conclusion: NYS gave municipalities until May to file their missing reports. North Tonawanda's report was filed on Dec. 1, 2020, and, therefore, our AIM funding should be restored.

Higgins: Federal fire grants available to support staffing & recruitment

Congressman Brian Higgins announced the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant application period is now open with a deadline of 5 p.m. March 12.

"Ensuring our fire departments have the resources required to maintain adequate staffing is critically important to the safety of our community and its members," Higgins said. "The SAFER program supports recruitment, hiring and retention efforts for both career and volunteer departments, and we encourage local departments to apply."

SAFER grants are aimed at increasing the number of firefighters and enhancing a department's ability to comply with federal standards to ensure communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. Congress allocated \$355 million for

the SAFER grant program in the current application round.

Departments with questions can also contact the fire grant help desk at firegrants@fema.dhs.gov

or 1-866-274-0960. More information on the SAFER fire grant program is available at <https://www.fema.gov/staffing-adequate-fire-emergency-response-grants>.

A school with small class sizes and big results...



Preschool, Kindergarten - Gr 8

OPEN HOUSE

Virtual or In Person
Tuesday, February 23rd
6:00 - 7:30pm

Come Meet Our Teachers & See Why Parents Are Choosing Holy Ghost

Offering in person instruction
5 DAYS PER WEEK

Scan the QR Code
to register for
OPEN HOUSE



Holy Ghost Lutheran School - (716) 731-3030
6630 Luther St., Wheatfield, NY 14304
Conveniently located on Niagara Rd. in Wheatfield
www.holyghostlcms.org

Town of Wheatfield

2021 Baseball & Softball Registration

NOW THROUGH MARCH 26TH

Recreation Department 6812 Nash Rd. • 731-3942

Mon. – Fri., 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

REGISTER IN PERSON OR ONLINE AT

WWW.WHEATFIELD.NY.US/159/RECREATION

Coed T-Ball - Ages 4-6

Coed Coach Pitch - Ages 6-8

**ALL NEW - 2 SESSIONS FOR T-BALL & COACH PITCH:
MAY - JUNE & SEPT. - OCT.**

Baseball - Ages 9-10, 11-12, 13-15

Girls Softball - Ages 9-11, 12-14, 15-18

**Jan. 1st birth date will
determine age for all leagues,
except for Baseball 13-15 is May 1st**

* Proof of residency is required at the time of registration.

A driver's license, tax receipt or utility bill is acceptable proof.

* To insure the safety and fairness to all participants, a birth certificate must be shown for 1st time participants at the time of registration.

If you have participated within the last 2 years and have shown proof of age, a birth certificate is not necessary.

* In-house baseball & softball registration fee \$60.00, t-ball & coach pitch registration fee \$40.00 each session for 1st child, \$20.00 for each additional child when registering at the same time, with a family max of \$90.00. An additional non-resident fee of \$40.00 for first child, \$20.00 for each additional child, will be charged for registrants from other communities.

*** Anyone signing up after March 26th will be charged a \$20.00 late fee per participant (\$40.00 for non-residents) and placed on a waiting list. Registrants after March 26th cannot be guaranteed a uniform due to manufacturer's availability.**