

914th Air Refueling Wing member recognized as best in Air Force

Senior Master Sgt. Jose R. Pagan Jr. won the Air Force First Sergeant of the Year Award. The award recognizes the important contributions and leadership qualities exhibited by Air Force members in the first sergeant special duty career field.

He competed against hundreds of nominees across the active, guard and reserve forces. At the time of nomination, Pagan

was the first sergeant for the 914th Maintenance Squadron. He currently serves as the first sergeant for the 914th Air Refueling Wing.

This award is based on three components: impact on mission readiness and execution, fostering resilience and teams in community, and developing self and others. Among Pagan's list of accomplishments, he received the Bronze Star for planning and executing an evacuation that safeguarded the lives of 155 airmen. Additionally, he tackled widespread pay issues, reducing late payments by 82%, and pioneered the first Central Command multinational leadership



course, which helped bolster the alliance between U.S. and coalition forces.

Pagan Jr.

The command chief for the 914th ARW, Chief Master Sgt. Donald Peters, said, "Senior Master Sgt. Pagan's selection as the First Sergeant of the Year is an honor that is bestowed as the 'Best of the Best.' The airmen of this level of recognition is one that truly shows the 'whole airmen concept' that I have personally witnessed as his command chief while he is in military status as well as meeting the peers, subordinates and students he works with during his civilian status. His display of care, passion and professionalism was recognized while in face of ex-

tremely difficult situations in a hostile environment. I am very proud of his accomplishments and truly honored to continue to work with him here at Niagara Falls."

914th Air Refueling Wing commander Col. Carl Magnusson said, "Senior Master Sgt. Pagan's selection as USAF First Sergeant of the Year is a huge win for Jose, his family, and the community. He has not only projected the ideals of the core values, but he lives the standard set by his neighbors and the people of Western New York. I could not be more proud of his accomplishments and I'm thrilled with this well-deserved recognition."

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Save a lot

Upcoming DOT public hearing for Niagara Falls Boulevard intersections

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

On July 21, the New York State Department of Transportation will hold a public hearing at the Wheatfield Community Center (2790 Church Road) related to the improvements proposed by the DOT for a pair of "dangerous" intersections along Niagara Falls Boulevard at Ward and Witmer roads. The hearing will run from 4-6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The areas in question have long been a point of contention for residents and town officials alike.

"Those intersections have always had numerous accidents

and emergency calls; we've had many rear-end accidents because there's no turning lanes. I think it's something that's long overdue," Supervisor Don MacSwan said. "We're hoping that, this time, the state does follow through with it; and we're hoping we get a good resident turnout at the public hearing."

Last year, the Tribune/Sentinel reported that, according to the Niagara County Sheriff's Office, there had been 48 accidents at the intersection of Ward Road and NFB since 2016 - 16 of which resulted in serious injury. The town

said grievances have been repeatedly shared with the DOT for over a decade but, until recently, little action had been taken. Last year however, the speed limit was permanently lowered in that section of the boulevard to 45 mph and new signage was added, including "Signal Ahead," "Be Prepared to Stop" and "Do Not Drive on Shoulder" signs.

However, many hope more extensive measures will be implemented at the Ward Road intersection, including a widening of the roadway, implementing designated left turn lanes, intersection repaving, replacement and/or installation of curb ramps, new traffic signals, and crosswalks and pedestrian signals as needed.

At the Witmer Road intersection, a proposal has been floated to create a straight road into Openheim Park. Currently, drivers traveling down Witmer have to make a left and then an immediate right into the park entrance.

"That would be a big benefit to the residents, since it's a straight shot into the park instead of making the left and creating more problems and more accidents," MacSwan said.

2 LOCATIONS

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