

Officials cite negative financial impacts from pandemic on localities

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amounted to \$31,794,688, with local communities expected to cover the remaining 5%, or \$1,589,735.

However, after having experienced the coronavirus pandemic over past months, Niagara County cities and towns – like those throughout the country – are contending with the pronounced negative financial impacts of extended shutdowns on their respective budgets. As a result, county officials are now asking the state for relief on having to address the 5% funding share.

In a June 11 letter authored to the governor by Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh, Vice Chairman John Syracuse and legislators Irene Myers and David Godfrey, county officials cited the mounting economic difficulties now facing localities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Local governments were already having difficulty identifying the 5% funding match before the pandemic; now it has become virtually impossible,” the county officials wrote. “Much like your request to the federal government to waive the 25% match FEMA requires of the state for federal disaster funds, we are asking you to do the same for us with REDI funds – waive the local match. ...

“The 5% share of these 11 projects totals only \$1.6 million, not a lot of money to the state, but an insurmountable hurdle locally.”

In closing, the county officials wrote, “Governor, the lakeshore communities in Niagara County need to get these projects done. It would be a shame if these projects lag because of the 5% match. Again, please consider waiving the local match requirement. Thank you for your consideration.”

As of this week, county officials were said to be still awaiting a response to the letter from the governor’s office.

“We have not heard back from the governor yet on our request,” Wydysh said on Thursday. “So I will continue to be in contact and ask Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul who I work with on regional economic issues (to see if we can get this resolved).”

Brickyard could be open by summer’s end

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days straight – I think at one time there was 400 texts I had to try to respond to. It’s overwhelming. Words can’t say anything.”

“Yeah, it’s great for us to be in this community,” Matthews said. “I’ve lived here my whole life. Ken’s lived in here and Youngstown his whole life. And to actually have the community rally behind it, you feel like you’re a native son of Lewiston. It’s unbelievable how people kind of just rallied. It’s crazy. And a lot of my neighbors actually gave me a little present and a really nice card, and they said that they feel like they’ve lost a place where they can hang out for a while. It’s almost like they’ve lost something and they have to get it back. So, I think that’s a main part of it, is everybody feels a little lost in the community, and everybody’s just rallying. It’s amazing.”

“And then even from our staff, our staff has been there. The majority of our staff has been there every single day from the hour the fire started,” Bryan said. “They’ve been there helping, cleaning, pulling what we can off to try to salvage what we can, to scrub down, just to support each other.”

“That and the breweries – the other breweries in Buffalo have stepped up and let John (Meteer) brew,” Matthews said.

He noted, “The different places, they’ve just stepped up and said, ‘You guys can come here and carry your thing until you get up and running and get your system back together.’ And I mean everybody. It’s crazy. Just every single person – anybody from construction to this (market fundraiser), every facet of the community has stepped up, which is amazing. We can’t wait to give it back.”

Lewiston Council on the Arts Artistic Director Eva Nicklas was at the market last weekend. Prior to a check presentation, she told Bryan and Matthews, “You already have given it back, and that’s one of the reasons that everybody loves you so much. You know, how many years have you supported the artists’ breakfast at the Lewiston Art Festival – every Sunday for the last, I don’t know, 15 years; and giving a breakfast to 150 artists, I mean, that’s huge for an organization like mine. So, you deserve every bit of love that’s been pouring out.”



Signs on the BBC and Brickyard thank local first responders and the Lewiston community.

Bryan said, “We plan on staying here long. We’re gonna rebuild. We’re not going away. It’s gonna take time, but we plan on being in the village long-term and doing the same.”

To that end, the owners have now turned their attention to rebuilding.

“We both said to each other, you know, building the brewery with our own hands and doing all that, and now it’s gone and we have to rebuild it. And we both looked at each other and said, ‘Can we physically do it again?’ We don’t know! I hope so,” Matthews said. “But we’re going to get a lot more help this time. But at the end of the day, it’s gonna be a long haul; but we’ll get it done – we got it done the first time. We’ll get it done again.”

He said, “Brickyard is being revitalized right now. We’re redoing the kitchen. It really just got a little bit of water damage on the floors and that from the water coming from BBC, so, because of that fire-block wall that we had, nothing happened. Very little smoke damage. It doesn’t smell any different than the smoke-house smelled before.”

“There’s a little roof repair, which we’re still waiting for insurance; unfortunately, they’re all on a no-fly program, so they’re still coming to look,” Bryan said.

“They’re all coming from different places,” Matthews added.

“Structural engineers coming from California or some crazy place,” Bryan said.

“We’re hoping to get (the Brickyard) up and going before the end of summer,” Matthews not-



ed. “And then the BBC probably, I don’t know, six to nine months, maybe, depending on how long it takes.”

The owners again expressed gratitude the fire wasn’t worse.

“Pretty much the top of it burned. The bottom floor, if you walked in there and walked in the hostess station the next day and you didn’t look behind you, you wouldn’t even know anything happened – which is crazy. The pizza boxes are still there, all white,” Matthews said.

“The fire pretty much started almost at the top of the second floor, so it stayed up, heat rising and got trapped in the roof. The metal roof is what saved probably the rest of the village,” Bryan said. “The firefighters did an amazing job.”

The Village Board recently approved a plan for the BBC brewers to build out a portion of the

back Barrel House in order to make beer.

“The village has just given us an OK, thank you ... to do a small little expansion, so we can put more equipment out there to get our brewing up and running as soon as possible,” Bryan said. “So, hopefully in the next week, we’ll start to possibly break ground and get that rolling. We’ll have to bring all new equipment in. All that equipment is in BBC, so we’ll temporarily relocate that outside. And then keep the taps flowing.”

BBC debuted in late spring of 2017, a majestic two-story structure, banquet area and brewery that instantly became the go-to place for events in Lewiston. It was designed by Bryan, Matthews, GM Steve Matthews, and architect Jim Fittante.

The Brickyard celebrated its 15th birthday in February.

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