


# Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

July 15, 2022 FREE 20 Pages Vol. 31 / No. 28 • Vol. 37 / No. 20



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## With developer eyeing mix of retail, restaurant & Airbnb, Frontier House renovation to 'get more exciting for people'

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Frontier House principals have cleared a major hurdle, and now have a plan in place to share the Village of Lewiston's "crown jewel" with residents and visitors.

On Wednesday, Ellicott Development Co. Director of Development Thomas M. Fox confirmed U.S. National Parks Service approved exterior and interior renovation plans for the site, which has been shuttered since former tenant McDonald's ended its lease in December 2004. Such authorization was required because the building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Previously, owners considered a boutique hotel or bed and breakfast. They have now settled on "a mix of five market-rate units and then six Airbnbs" on the top floors, Fox said.

"We liked the fact that we had this additional mix in uses in there, on top of the commercial, to capitalize on a lot of the seasonal activity in Lewiston.

"We're also going through an effort to produce a marketing plan for this property, treating the property as more of a draw in and of itself, on top of the draw of Lewiston; but trying to draw up on the 200-year-old history of the building, the notable guests of the past that stayed there in the 1800s, 1900s. And trying to

Pictured is a new, lower-level sign outside of the Frontier House at 460 Center St., Lewiston.

create, again, the building's own draw; trying to tell a story around that and help bring guests in to take advantage of that history."

On the ground level and basement, the developer is looking for tenants offering a mix of retail and restaurant options.

"We've gotten quite a bit of interest towards those spaces," Fox said. "We're trying to keep intact a lot of the common-area circulation within the first floor, which divides the first floor into two different spaces. So, it creates a unique opportunity, and challenge I guess, to try and lease those smaller spaces, but we've had a lot of interest on the way we're trying to divide that floor up, and working towards a lease agreement on one or all those spaces as we move forward.

"We're hoping to be in a position to start construction maybe by the end of the summer here. We're wrapping up drawings, and hopefully we'll be ready for occupancy sometime later next year, next summer."

One first-floor rental unit will be available, too.

"Part of the rehabilitation into the property is going to include reconstruction of the rear porch, which is historic, and demolished



many, many years ago," Fox said. "We'll be able to have that one dwelling unit in the back be accessed from that porch area in the rear that will be reconstructed."

### Promising Project

Fox said the Airbnb model is appealing because, "When it comes to Airbnb, in my own

SEE FRONTIER, on Page 5

## Sanborn Lewiston Farm Fest returns

BY TERRY DUFFY

Editor-in-Chief

The Sanborn Historical Society invites residents to check out the return of the Sanborn Lewiston Farm Fest, taking place Saturday and Sunday, July 23-24, on the grounds of the Farm Museum, 2660 Saunders Settlement Road in Lewiston.

Historical Society officials posted on their Facebook page: "This is the first one in two years, so stop in and get a bite to eat and see what is going on!"

Another fun community event returning following cancellations attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers said many of the festival's attractions of years' past will again be on site. Included are antique tractors, tractor parades, artisans, a flea market, craft show and bake sale. Also, foods, music, a basket auction, produce vendors, a host of kids activities, visits from Wild Critters and plenty of Farm Museum exhibits.

That's not all. Also expected are performances by the Native American Niagara River Dancers, plus a Volkswagen car show on Saturday, and an "All-Classic Car Cruise" on Sunday.

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## Amazon looking for NCIDA PILOT; improvements to Town of Niagara possible

BY TIMOTHY CHIPP

What once looked like a long and arduous process bringing an Amazon warehouse to the Town of Niagara is now down to only a few remaining steps.

On Tuesday, Zoning Board of Appeals members approved three different types of variances for the project, according to Supervisor Lee Wallace.

With those complete – granted for the five-story building height, signage size and placement and driveway location – site plan approval and finalizing any tax agreements remain.

Wallace said the project is expected to come up for a vote at the Town Council's meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, at Niagara Town Hall, 7105 Lockport Road.

And according to several media reports, the tax questions could be finalized with the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency board soon.

According to reports, the NCIDA board agreed to set a public hearing on granting Amazon more than \$120 million in tax breaks over a 15-year span.

Any payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT, wouldn't have much

impact on the Town of Niagara, though, according to Wallace. Niagara only collects taxes in special districts, with no general fund town tax.

Amazon's facility would impact the town's Highway Department funding only, with the overwhelming majority of Amazon's negotiated tax breaks affecting Niagara County as a whole and the Niagara Wheatfield Central School District.

But Wallace and other council members have argued previously that the presence of Amazon's facility, valued at \$550 million in

the latest estimates, would allow the town to repave and maintain roads at a cheaper cost to residents.

Those roads, Wallace said, would go across the entire town. But Amazon may take care of a few of Niagara's biggest problem spots for them right away.

Amazon's plan is to make significant changes to the way traffic flows on Lockport and Packard roads, which Wallace said are expected to make things safer, not more dangerous.

"This isn't going to stop the traffic, but it will control it better," he

said after a work session Wednesday.

Wallace added he expects residents from the surrounding areas to continue voicing their displeasure with the proposal, but that there are several residents in the town who are excited by what Amazon is bringing and want the project to move forward.

He said their job on the council is to balance all of those opinions with financial and safety issues to make a decision.

"Our job is to make a decision of what's best for the whole town," he said.

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