

Erie County Taxpayer Newsletter

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From County Executive Chris Collins



Summer is upon us and the Erie County Parks Department has been busy making sure our parks are ready for summertime fun.

Wendt and Bennett Beaches will be open seven days a week, a change from previous years, in an effort to provide more beach time for all Erie County families. I'm proud to say my administration worked hard to ensure that our beaches would be ready for enjoyment all summer long.

Also open for business are the County's two golf courses at Elma Meadows and Grover Cleveland in Amherst. I urge you to take advantage of the new driving range at Elma Meadows for additional practice perfecting your swing.

Keep in mind that shelters are available for all of your summer get-togethers. As a result of a Six Sigma initiative, we are offering a new and improved feature, online shelter reservations. To take advantage of this new feature go to www.erie.gov/parks.

Enjoy your summer in beautiful Erie County!

Erie County Assists Northern Neighbor

Erie and Niagara counties have entered into an inter-municipal agreement to share Geographic Information System (GIS) services for the next five years. GIS is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing physical features. One of the more popular aspects of Erie County's GIS program is an interactive Internet Mapping Application which is used to view property data, aerial photos, and environmental features.

Niagara County has recognized the value of this program, and its need to begin using one similar to Erie County. With the new agreement, Niagara County will be able to take advantage of Erie County's GIS knowledge and infrastructure in order to build their GIS program at a significantly reduced cost.

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Six Sigma Update

Commissioners and Department Heads in Erie County government are undergoing Culture Change Management training with Six Sigma Director Al Hammonds. Their goal is to develop a culture change plan for Erie County employees which will enhance the implementation of Six Sigma.

In order to create this vision for change, the individuals involved are following the Culture Change Model. This model requires a transition plan be created to address how the desired change will occur.

Elements of the Culture Change Model include Management Behavior, Communications, Recognition & Reward, Standards & Measures, Training and Transition Management. The transition plan will be created to include all of the listed aspects. Six Sigma individuals will then implement the plan throughout Erie County.

Quarterly Mayors and Supervisors Meeting Held

County Executive Collins hosted the second quarterly Mayors and Supervisors meeting on June 10th at Erie Community College's South Campus. ECC President Jack Quinn opened the meeting, which was attended by 24 out of 25 area supervisors.

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Meeting continued...

Meeting attendees received a presentation from the Department of Environment and Planning on its economic development efforts.

The presentation showcased both the traditional as well as the non-traditional forms of planning that the department spearheads. Some of the newer, non-traditional projects done by DEP staff include façade and streetscape programs for commercial centers, village center analysis, and quality of life projects.

The department outlined its economic development role in the community. DEP has been working on business development, growing existing businesses, providing tax and other incentives, and assisting local development agencies.

Veterans Services Unites with Area Non-Profits

The Erie County Department of Veterans Services has joined with area not-for-profit groups to provide benefits to local military personnel. This is the first time since World War II that every National Guard and Reserve unit in the Western New York area has been deployed overseas.

The deployment of so many WNY community members has created new issues and strains for local families. With the new partnerships, Veterans Services will have the ability to refer families having difficulties with deployment to specialized programs.

Upon returning home from active duty, many soldiers are affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Unfortunately, many may not choose to seek help out of concern for their careers. Instead of going to a VA facility, where marks on their personnel record could hinder a soldier's chance at future promotions, they can go to an area not-for-profit for assistance. WNY facilities such as Horizon and Headway, a traumatic brain injury center, are better prepared to confidentially handle military personnel.

Veterans Services Director Patrick Welch is hoping that Erie County's new affiliation with area not-for-profits will also become a resource for the Veterans Hospital in Buffalo.

Mentholatum Gives Back

The Mentholatum Company purchased and installed a new play set at Chestnut Ridge Park, Shelter #31 on June 5, 2008. The company is currently celebrating the 20 year anniversary of its purchase by Rohto Pharmaceuticals, Ltd of Japan. To commemorate this celebration, employees chose Chestnut Ridge Park as a way to give back to the community that has given them so much.



The entire Mentholatum facility was shut down and all employees participated in the playground building event. A large number of employees assembled the playground, while others helped with trash cleanup and general grounds maintenance at Chestnut Ridge Park.

Mentholatum has been in business in Western New York since 1909 and has a strong heritage and commitment to the area. The Mentholatum World and US Division Headquarters are in Orchard Park, with divisions in Australia, South Africa, Canada, Scotland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, México, Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Japan. Mentholatum employs over 1,500 people worldwide with 225 employees headquartered at the Orchard Park facility.

GIS continued...

A high-speed microwave network connection has been installed between Niagara and Erie counties through a grant from New York State. This connection will support the sharing of GIS data and applications as well as public safety information. Erie County will host Niagara County's GIS data and applications, in return for annual payments from Niagara County for the maintenance and enhancement of Erie County's program. This cooperative agreement is expected to save taxpayers \$900,000 over the next five years.

News from the Department of Public Works

Erie County's Department of Public Works has released important information regarding upcoming summer projects.

The oil and chipping process has begun throughout the County. Chip sealing is done by applying a thin layer of oil to a road surface, followed by a layer of stone chips. It is then pressed by a steam roller and swept to remove dust and loose stone. This yearly road treatment is done to preserve and prolong the life of roads. Work in the Clarence district has been completed and is currently ongoing in all other districts within the County.

The Wherle Dr., Freeman Rd., and Como Park Blvd. roadway projects have all been sent to bid and awarded to contractors throughout the County. Work is expected to begin on all three projects shortly.

The paving schedule for roads has also been completed. Work throughout the County will begin shortly and last for the remainder of the summer and into early fall.

