

The Buffalo News Everybody's column

Status quo is upheld, bringing more of same

On June 25, the Erie County Legislature voted against a motion to override the veto of County Executive Chris Collins of the Strategic Development Act, which would have created a county planning board. Legislator Maria Whyte and others from the Democratic caucus made impassioned pleas, noting that support for the act was bipartisan among those who grasp the big picture of 21st century economic development. The arguments against were vague, contradictory and often downright misinformed.

So where are we? The status quo has been upheld and it's not going to be pretty. Unneeded McMansions will continue to replace corn in our fields. Our multiple development agencies will continue to compete with each other to entice jobs to their towns with unaffordable tax breaks. The Framework for Regional Growth—the document created and approved by Erie and Niagara counties that provides a road map, including a county planning board, for sensible future growth— has, for now, been rendered moot.

Collins said, "It would have been a tragic waste of taxpayers' money." Really? Even at his preposterous estimate of \$500,000 a year, that's \$12.5 million over the 25 years that the framework projects savings of \$800 million. Collins' assertion of one-person rule makes him fully accountable for what happens next. It's a gamble I fear we will all regret.

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