



WNY's Premier Home Finder Online!
See Recent Neighborhood Sales...

Access Complete MLS listings...



THE BUFFALO NEWS

 **PRINT THIS**

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Donn Esmonde: Politicians who inspire gratitude

By Donn Esmonde
News Columnist

Updated: 11/30/08 10:17 AM

There is a lot to give thanks for this season. Even, in some cases, for elected officials. I do not make a habit of praising politicians, although I wish I had reason to do it more often. But there are some folks whom we pay to watch our backs who give us our money's worth. Here are a few whose primary passion is not self-preservation.

Mickey Kearns: Yes, the jut-jawed South Buffalo councilman talks as if he gets paid by the word and counts divisive developer Carl Paladino among his backers. But I have a soft spot for politicians who educate themselves on an issue before opening their mouths and take on formidable foes to fight for a worthy cause.

Kearns did both in the ongoing battle to erase the elevated, anti-development "wall" of Route 5 south of downtown. He brought in progressive ex-Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist to argue for the alternative of a ground-level boulevard. He led fellow Council members on educational jaunts to other cities. He imported urban planners from Toronto.

All of it goes beyond what we usually see from elected officials, although it ought to be standard behavior. Add his work in wrapping up the toxic-land settlement for Hickory Woods homeowners, and Kearns stands above the crowd.

Paul Dyster: Niagara Falls' first-year mayor is the leader that Buffalo's City Hall needs, but never gets: a policy wonk with progressive sensibilities who understands urban development. He was a city councilman, promoting the Falls' natural attractions, when I met him eight years ago. His environmentalist background shows in policies from "green" buildings to using cheap Niagara Falls hydropower to aid renewable-energy businesses.

The ex-college professor is deodorizing a political culture notorious for shady dealings and failed development. Dyster promotes regional tourism, wants to relocate the train station to an Underground Railroad site and has long lobbied to eliminate roads and buildings that, absurdly, block downtown from the natural wonder. If talk of an upstate replacement for Sen. Hillary Clinton was based — imagine it — more on merit than on politics, Dyster would be near the front of the pack.



National Fuel

If you are a family of 4 with a gross annual income of \$45,312, help is available for paying your heating bill.

[Click Here](#)
Learn more

Kathy Konst: The county legislator from Lancaster is among the few true reformers swept into the Legislature in the wake of the red/green budget fiasco. Unlike most of her cohorts, Konst does not march in lock-step with a party boss or political mentor. Party-bucking acts include pushing to downsize the Legislature, refusing to rubber-stamp Water Authority appointees and voting to cut costs on construction projects.

Her independence likely cost her state Democratic Party backing in her failed race against Albany institution Dale Volker. Claims during the campaign that she 10 years ago voted here and in Florida defied logic. Her character and principles, to my mind, buttressed her claim of a clerical error. In my view, she is the county lawmaker who gives constituents the best.

Bill Cansdale: Give credit to the Village of Lancaster mayor. Instead of — like most of his town and village counterparts — hearing downsizing guru Kevin Gaughan’s call for smaller government and slamming the door, Cansdale kicked it open. Cansdale’s belief that citizens have a right to decide whether to cut board members revealed him, and his supporting board members, as public servants instead of self-servants.

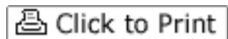
Similar moves by North Collins’ **John Mrozek**, Depew’s **Barbara Alberti** and West Seneca’s **Wally Piotrowski** put them in the same league.

Unfortunately, politicians who understand that they work for the people, instead of the other way around, are the exception. For them, we give thanks.

desmonde@buffnews.com

Find this article at:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/donnesmonde/story/508838.html>



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.