



# The Vestal Town Crier

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Vol. 35 No. 22 NEWSTAND PRICE \$1.00 Friday, January 19, 2024 SUBSCRIBE at [Publisher@TiersNews.com](mailto:Publisher@TiersNews.com)

## The Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra Presents “Mozart Requiem”

On Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 3pm, the Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra presents “Mozart Requiem.” Maestro Daniel Hege leads the orchestra in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Requiem in D Minor, along with the combined choirs of the Southern Tier Singers’ Collective and the Binghamton University Chamber Singers under the direction of William Culverhouse, and vocal soloists from the Curtis Institute of Music: soprano Juliette Tacchino, mezzo-soprano Katie Trigg, tenor Jackson Allen, and bass Evan Gray. The program is preceded at 2pm by a pre-concert chat, “Mozart, Modernism, and Memory,” given by the Philharmonic’s Director of Education and Community Engagement, Dr. Julia Grella O’Connell. Tickets are \$25 to \$65. Kids 17 and under attend free, thanks to M&T Bank. For more information, contact the Binghamton Philharmonic Box Office at 607-723-3931 or visit [www.binghamtonphilharmonic.org](http://www.binghamtonphilharmonic.org).

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Soprano Juliette Tacchino



Mezzo-soprano Katie Trigg



Tenor Jackson Allen



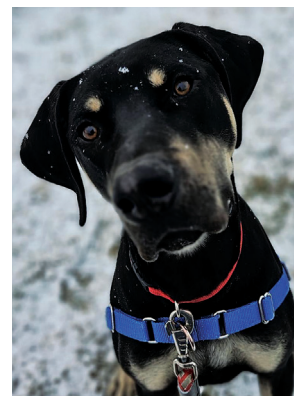
Bass-Baritone Evan Gray

**Winter Parking Rules Are In Effect Until March 31**

Parking of vehicles is prohibited on all Town and County roads in Vestal between the hours of 2am-6am. 2. Appointment of Suzanne Messina to the position of Deputy Town Supervisor.

**PET OF THE WEEK:**

**Knox**



Hi, I’m Knox! I’m an 8-year-old puppy and I’m growing very fast! I love to play with toys, eat snacks, and wrestle with other big dogs. I am a very smart boy. I know how to sit AND lay down! Nice to meet you!

Send in a photo of your pet with a short bio to: [kirsten@tiersnews.com](mailto:kirsten@tiersnews.com) to have your pet in the paper!

## Vestal Scholars



### SUNY Cortland announces Fall 2023 President's List

Haley Boulter of Vestal, NY (Childhood Early Childhd Ed B-6)

Brooke Hathaway of Apalachin, NY (Inclusive Ed Child (Wait))

Thomas Hayes of Vestal, NY (Sport Management)

Angelina Zakrajsek of Vestal, NY (Pre-Major)



On Page 3!

**Golden Bears Take on STAC West Powers**



**“Safe Winter Driving: Tips for Navigating Snow and Ice” On Page 5**



# Calendar

**Friday, January 19th**  
**Sports Cards Collecting; 3PM**  
 More info on page 4

**Saturday, January 20th**  
**Chocolate Bar Sale at Lowe's in Vestal**  
**10AM - 2PM**

**Tuesday, January 23rd**  
 >Java Joe Jammers - Live Music  
**6PM, VPL Meeting Room**  
 >Preschool Storytime; 10:30am

**Wednesday, January 24th**  
 >Teen Game Day at the VPL  
**3PM; ages 12-18**  
 >Vestal Town Board Meeting; 6PM

**Saturday, January 27th**  
**Family Swim at VHS**  
**12PM - 3PM: open swim**  
**3PM - 4:15PM: lap swim**

**Sunday, January 28th**  
**Mozart Requiem**  
**The Binghamton Philharmonic; 3PM**

**Monday, January 29th**  
**VPL Elementary STEAM**  
**4:45PM; ages 6-11**



## Vestal Fire Department Responses

vestalfire.com

by Walt Schlundt, Public Information Officer

01/09 11:08 West Drive	General
fire alarm	
01/10 11:17 Vestal Road	Odor of
gas in kitchen area	
01/10 14:44 West Drive	Motor
vehicle accident with entrapment	
01/11 23:22 Front Street	Fire inside
wall - became a two-alarm house fire	
01/12 10:10 East Drive	General
fire alarm	
01/12 15:08 Leroy Street	Mutual
aid to City of Binghamton for a building fire.	
Flames showing from the roof	
01/13 01:04 Underwood Road	Commer-
cial fire alarm	
01/13 19:02 Vestal Parkway E.	Carbon
monoxide alarm in food area	
01/14 11:08 Donna Drive	Tree down
on lines/ tree into house	



# VESTAL POLICE REPORT

Scott Franks, 25, Owego, arrested for Criminal Contempt 1st Degree and Aggravated Harassment 2nd Degree for violating a valid order of protection by calling the victim's workplace multiple times without any legitimate purpose, causing the victim to feel harassed.

Joseph Bisaha, 60, Vestal, arrested for Harassment 2nd Degree for pushing the victim into a stove during a domestic incident.

Heba Bakhit, 22, Binghamton, arrested for Petit Larceny for shoplifting from Wal-Mart.

Sarah Harrison-Pautard, 47, Binghamton arrested for Driving While Ability Impaired by Drugs or Alcohol, Driving Over Hazard Markings and Driving on a Sidewalk after an investigation of a vehicle stopped in the roadway.

David Mutz, 54, Windsor, arrested for Criminal Tampering 3rd Degree for taking the victim's car keys and putting them in a garbage can, causing substantial inconvenience.

Bryan McGovern, 49, Vestal, arrested for Driving While Intoxicated, Refusal of Breath Test, Failure to Keep Right and two counts of Speed in Zone after a traffic stop.

Alyssa Chukloski, 39, Homeless, arrested for Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th Degree for possessing heroin/fentanyl when arrested on a warrant.

Robert Spoonhower, 37, Homeless, arrested for Criminal Contempt 2nd Degree for violating a valid stay away order of protection by getting into an argument with the victim.

Raneisha Bolton, 26, Binghamton, arrested for Petit Larceny for shoplifting from Wal-Mart.

Lucas Duffy, 21, Vestal, arrested for Menacing 2nd Degree, Harassment 2nd Degree and Criminal Mischief 4th Degree for threatening the victim with a knife, threatening to kill the victim and preventing the victim from calling for police assistance during a domestic incident.

Karen Younger, 52, Endicott, arrested for Petit Larceny for shoplifting from Wal-Mart.

Joey Whitney, 54, Binghamton, arrested for Burglary 3rd Degree for shoplifting from Wal-Mart after previously being banned from the location.

# Vestal Town Crier

**NEWS/ADVERTISING DEADLINE**  
 The Vestal Town Crier goes to press on Wednesdays. Deadline for news and advertising is the Friday before the desired week of publication.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
 Subscription rates to The Vestal Town Crier are \$35 a year in Broome County, \$100 outside of Broome County, and papers are mailed every Thursday from Conklin.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**  
 All letters to the editor are welcomed. All letters must be signed and include the phone number of the writer, to be used for verification of authenticity, not for publication. The editor reserves the right to refuse to publish letters which contain potentially libelous or erroneous statements. Also, letters endorsing political candidates are considered advertisements and should be prepaid as is all political advertising. No letters to the editor regarding political candidates will be accepted.

Vestal Town Crier (USPS 0052-26)  
 Published weekly by Newspaper Publishers LLC  
 PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID at Conklin, NY 13748  
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:  
 Vestal Town Crier P.O. Box  
 Publisher: Gretchen VanWalterop  
 607 775-0472  
 Member



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 dbergerattorney@gmail.com 301 N. Stage Rd., Vestal

# Fishers Advised to Review Ice Safety Guidelines before Heading Out

Outdoor enthusiasts considering ice fishing this winter season should be aware of essential safety guidelines during ice fishing season and anglers should make sure the ice is thick enough before venturing out, especially given recent variations in weather conditions.

"Winter in New York provides outdoor adventurers with some of the very best opportunities to enjoy New York's natural resources," Commissioner Seggos said. "As it gets colder, wintertime anglers need to exercise extreme caution and always put safety first when heading out onto the ice for fishing."

Before leaving shore, ice anglers are advised to check the thickness of ice. Four inches of solid, clear ice is usually safe for anglers accessing ice on foot. However, ice thickness can vary between waterbodies and even within the same waterbody, increasing the need to ensure thickness. Anglers should be particularly cautious of areas of moving water and around boat docks and houses where bubblers may be installed to reduce ice from forming. Checking the ice can easily be done with an auger or spud bar at various spots. Local bait and tackle shops are a great source for finding out where there is safe ice and what anglers are catching. In addition, fishing with family and friends is also encouraged for safety.

Those interested in trying ice fishing for the first time should mark the weekend of Feb. 17-18 on their calendars. As a designated free freshwater fishing weekend, the need for a freshwater fishing license is waived during these days. This free fishing weekend is also a great opportunity for experienced anglers to introduce someone new to fishing.

For some fish species, ice fishing can be more productive than open-water fishing. Given good ice conditions, anglers normally limited to shore fishing can access an

entire waterbody. For a more interactive option, DEC released a series of six ice fishing videos on the agency's YouTube channel. Visit the playlist to check out the brief instructional videos. Additional information, including a list of waters open to ice fishing, can be found on the DEC ice fishing webpage.

The use of bait fish is popular when ice fishing and may be used in most, but not all, waters open to ice fishing. For more information on bait fish regulations visit DEC's website. To protect New York's waters from invasive species and the spread of fish diseases, anglers are advised to take these critical steps when using baitfish while ice fishing:

- Review and follow DEC baitfish regulations;
- Ensure the use of baitfish is permitted in the waterbody by checking the special 'regulations by county' section of the fishing regulations guide;
- Use only certified, disease-free bait fish purchased from a local tackle store (buyers must retain the receipt provided to them while in possession of the baitfish);
- Personally collected bait fish may only be used in the same waterbody from which they were caught; and
- Dump unused baitfish and water in an appropriate location on dry land.
- Know before you go! The location and type of waterbody matters when it comes to ice safety.

DEC reminds anglers to make sure that they have a valid fishing license before heading out on the ice. Fishing licenses are valid for 365 days from the date of purchase.



## "...Mozart Requiem" Continued From Page 1

### Soprano Juliette Tacchino

Juliette Tacchino, a soprano from Nice, France, is a graduate of the Nice Conservatory and the University of Montréal. Juliette is currently pursuing her master's degree at the Curtis Institute of Music, where she recently performed under the baton of Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra. She has sung the role of Ginevra in Ariodante with Curtis Opera Theater and the Philadelphia-based Baroque orchestra Tempesta di Mare under the baton of David Stern. This season she performs the role of Thérèse in Les Mamelles de Tirésias, and will be a soloist in the Curtis Symphony Orchestra concert "Spectacular Strauss" with Maestro Nézet-Séguin in collaboration with Nicholas McGegan.

### Mezzo-soprano Katie Trigg

Mezzo-soprano Katie Trigg hails from New Zealand, where she was a Dame Malvina Major Foundation Studio Artist with New Zealand Opera, and performed as a soloist with Auckland Opera and the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra. Katie is now in the Opera Studies program at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she has appeared as a featured soloist with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin. This season she makes her role debut as Anna I in Curtis Opera Theater's production of Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins*, and returns to the Curtis Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Nézet-Séguin's direction for "Spectacular Strauss."

### Tenor Jackson Allen

Tenor Jackson Allen, originally from Northern Ontario, Canada, has performed the roles of Rainette in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and Dickson in Norman's *The Secret Garden* with the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory,

1st Armored Man in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with Santa Rosa Symphony, and the Magician in Menotti's *The Consul*, Silvio/Pasquin/Miracle in Bizet's *Le docteur Miracle*, and the title role of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. This season, Jackson performs in the Curtis Opera Theatre productions of Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, Poulenc's *Mamelles de Tirésias*, and Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen*. He currently attends the Curtis Institute of Music.

### Bass-Baritone Evan Gray

Evan Gray, a bass-baritone from Zurich, Switzerland, is a first year master's student at the Curtis Institute of Music. As part of Curtis Opera Theater, he has sung the roles of Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore*, Rê di Scozia in *Ariodante*, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, and Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. In concert, he has performed as bass soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with Syracuse Symphoria and Mozart's *Requiem* with Wichita Symphony.

### About the Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra

Founded by Fritz and Marianne Wallenberg in 1955 at the Binghamton Symphony and Choral Society and later merging with the B.C. Pops, an orchestra founded by David Agard and Russell Hawkes, the Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra presents an annual series of classical, pops, and chamber music concerts in Downtown Binghamton and throughout Broome County. The professional musicians of the Philharmonic, represented by Local 380 of the American Federation of Musicians, hail from the Southern Tier, New York City, and surrounding states. Maestro Daniel Hege was appointed Music Director in 2018.

# Governor Hochul Unveils The Consumer Protection Agenda For 2024

Governor Kathy Hochul kicked off the 2024 State of the State with the announcement of a comprehensive Consumer Protection and Affordability Agenda on Tuesday. The proposal aims to enhance consumer protections by amending state consumer laws to address unfair business practices. Additionally, it includes groundbreaking regulations for the Buy Now Pay Later loan industry, a push for increased paid medical leave benefits, the introduction of a far-reaching plan to eliminate co-pays for insulin on specific insurance plans, and the proposal of new laws to alleviate the burden of medical debt.

Governor Hochul says the inaugural component of the 2024 State of the State is their Consumer Protection & Affordability Agenda, focusing on combating the impacts of illness, disability, unfair business practices, and low wages. If the past two years were about putting more money in New Yorkers' pockets, this year is about preserving those earnings by safeguarding people's hard-earned cash.

This announcement precedes Governor Hochul's State of the State address scheduled for January 9 at 1 p.m. Interestingly, the unveiling of this agenda coincides with the recent increase in New York State's minimum wage on January 1.

## The Broome County Provides Advice On Maintaining Good Health Throughout The Flu Season

The Broome County Health Department indicates that the flu season typically commences in October and extends until May each year. In early December, the Department of Public Health declared the flu prevalent in New York State. Broome County has observed a recent uptick in flu cases, with Public Health Educator Chloe Parker reporting an increase in both Flu A and Flu B cases.

Parker stated that Broome County has witnessed a rise in both Flu A and Flu B cases, which is not uncommon for this time of year. We have a total of 247 cases for Broome County so far, and we anticipate a slight increase over the next few months.

While the Broome County Health Department advises that the optimal time for flu vaccination is in the fall, Parker emphasizes that it's not too late to get vaccinated. She underscores the importance of flu vaccination, especially for those aged 6 months or older. Individuals aged 65 or older, immunocompromised individuals, or pregnant individuals may face a higher risk of contracting the flu.

Beyond the flu, other illnesses are prevalent during this season. Parker notes that mild symptoms may indicate a cold, but more severe symptoms should prompt individuals to consult a doctor. She advises seeking medical attention for symptoms such as fever, cough, a general feeling of unwellness, and especially if they escalate to shortness of breath, nausea, or vomiting.

Preventive measures recommended by the Broome County Health Department include regular handwashing and staying home from work or school if sick to minimize the risk of flu transmission.

# Antiques Society of Broome County

January 19, 2024 • 3:00pm

Joe Profera presents

## Sports Cards Collecting



Mike Trout 2011 Bowman Chrome US \$749,999.99

Vestal United Methodist Church  
328 Main Street • Vestal, New York

The General Public is Welcome

Guests and Visitors are Invited to Join at the Door

For Information Contact: Luke Kaczynski • 607-239-8009

### TOWN OF VESTAL RECREATION DEPARTMENT



## ONLINE PAVILION RENTALS AT ARNOLD PARK

Go to [vestalny.myrec.com](http://vestalny.myrec.com) to reserve a pavilion.

Rentals  
Began Jan  
1st!



New Pavilion #4 provided by the Parks Dept



# PRESCHOOL STORYTIME

SIX WEEK SESSION BEGINS JANUARY 9

TUESDAYS @ 10:30 AM

Themes:

1/9 - Penguins

1/16 - Pizza

1/23 - Sleep \*\*

1/30 - Hats \*\*

2/6 - Dogs

2/13 - Valentine's Day

\*\* This craft

involves paint.

Please, bring a

smock or wear

clothes that can

get messy.



# THE FATHER DAUGHTER BALL

**Saturday, February 10th, 2024**

**5:00 PM - 9:00 PM**

**The Doubletree by Hilton, 225 Water Street, Binghamton, NY**

Fathers and daughters, join us for a wonderful evening of dinner and dancing. The buffet will include flank steak, breaded chicken fingers, gourmet macaroni and cheese, garlic mashed potatoes, glazed baby carrots, salad, cookies, and brownies.

All seating is assigned and tables will hold a maximum of ten. We will do our best to honor seating requests. Complete tables of ten are guaranteed.

List all the names of the adults and children that you wish to be seated with on the registration form under "table requests". If you do not have a seating preference, leave it blank and we will seat you with another family.

All ages are welcome. **Open to Town of Vestal and Apalachin residents only.**

**Cost for Vestal residents: \$50.00 adults, \$35.00 daughters**

**Cost for Apalachin residents: \$60.00 adults, \$45.00 daughters (non-resident fee).**

**Deadline to register: Friday, January 26th at 4:30 pm, unless it fills earlier.**



# Amplifying the Voices of Caregivers and Families

(StatePoint) Advocates say it's important to not only honor caregivers' dedication, compassion, and resilience, but to also acknowledge their challenges and aspirations. Doing so can help families thrive. Here are three ways that can happen:

## 1. Put families at the center of efforts to help families.

Ascend at the Aspen Institute uses the two generation (2Gen) approach long used by Indigenous communities in the United States and around the world. This approach recognizes that the goal of supporting families' well-being and helping children thrive is most attainable when advancing the interests of children and the adults in their lives together. As one example, Ascend worked with a father who grew up in poverty, but now serves on his local school board and informs state efforts to help others experiencing homelessness or poverty.

## 2. Lift voices, build power, expand equity.

That's the refrain of the Raising Child Care Fund, which advises and supports local efforts around the country to expand access to child care. These efforts work best when they are informed and led by parents and caregivers themselves. As a case in point, a network of advocates and parents in New Mexico worked for 12 years to codify a right to child care and early education within the state constitution.

## 3. Through commitment you can see impact.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has committed itself to some of these principles in its own work, establishing the Family Advisory Committee—a collective of 12 parents and caregiver leaders from across the country with unique and diverse backgrounds, races and ethnicities, and family dynamics. The group has informed funding and grantmaking decisions by the Foundation, and contributed to efforts to align its own family supportive policies with these principles. To learn more about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's programs aiming to create a brighter, more supportive future for families and caregivers, visit <https://www.rwjf.org/>.

Initiatives and programs across the country are committed to emphasizing a collective approach that places families at the center of developing effective caregiving solutions. Collaboration is key to engaging families in decision-making processes and internal procedures, and the creation of initiatives that address the diverse needs and aspirations of communities is vital to improve the health and well-being of families today and in the future.

## FUN FACTS!

1. A Shot of Espresso Contains Less Caffeine Than a Cup of Coffee.
2. Disney Is the Second-Largest Buyer of Explosives in the World.
3. Crocodiles Are More Closely Related to Birds Than They Are to Lizards.
4. Lefties Are More Accident-Prone Than Righties.
5. Michael Jordan Got Cut from the Basketball Team During High School.
6. Wimbledon Umpires Are Given a List of Swear Words in Different Languages so they can call out athletes for profanity.
7. The State of California has a Larger Population Than the Entire Country of Canada.
8. The Average Cloud Weighs 1.1 Million Pounds.
9. Jousting is the official sport of the state of Maryland.

# Safe Winter Driving: Tips for Navigating Snow and Ice

As winter blankets the landscape with snow and ice, navigating the roads can become challenging and hazardous. Safe winter driving requires a combination of preparation, caution, and adaptability to the ever-changing weather conditions. Whether you are a seasoned driver or facing your first winter behind the wheel, these tips will help you arrive at your destination safely.

## 1. Prepare Your Vehicle:

a. Winter Tires: Consider investing in winter tires, designed to provide better traction in icy and snowy conditions.

b. Fluids and Battery: Ensure that your vehicle's fluids, including antifreeze, are at the appropriate levels. A well-charged battery is crucial for starting your car in cold temperatures.

c. Brakes and Lights: Regularly check your brakes and lights to ensure they are in proper working condition.

d. Emergency Kit: Pack a winter emergency kit, including items like a blanket, flashlight, jumper cables, and a first aid kit.

## 2. Check Weather Conditions:

a. Stay Informed: Before heading out, check weather forecasts and road conditions. If conditions are severe, consider delaying your trip or finding an alternative route.

b. Clear Snow and Ice: Remove all snow and ice from your vehicle, including windows, lights, and the roof. This enhances visibility and prevents snow from falling onto the road while driving.

## 3. Adjust Your Driving Style:

a. Reduce Speed: Slow down and drive at a speed appropriate for the road conditions. This gives you more time to react to unexpected obstacles or slippery spots.

b. Increase Following Distance: Leave extra space between your vehicle and the one in front of you to allow for increased stopping distances.

c. Avoid Sudden Movements: Gentle and gradual movements are key to maintaining control on slippery surfaces. Avoid abrupt acceleration, braking, and steering.

d. Use Lower Gears: In icy or hilly conditions, use lower gears to improve traction when accelerating and descending.

## 4. Braking Techniques:

a. Anticipate Stops: Start slowing down well in advance when approaching intersections or stops. Sudden braking on icy roads can lead to skidding.

b. Pump Brakes: If your vehicle is not equipped with an anti-lock braking system (ABS), practice pumping the brakes gently to prevent skidding.

## 5. Visibility is Key:

a. Use Lights: Keep your headlights on, even during the day, to enhance visibility for yourself and other drivers.

b. Clear Windows: Ensure that all windows are clear of frost and condensation. Use defrosters and windshield wipers as needed.

## 6. Stay Informed and Flexible:

a. Listen to Traffic Reports: Stay informed about changing road conditions and traffic updates through radio or other reliable sources.

b. Consider Alternatives: If conditions deteriorate during your journey, be prepared to alter your route or pull over in a safe location until conditions improve.

Safe winter driving requires a combination of proactive vehicle preparation, adjusting driving habits, and staying informed about weather conditions. By following these tips, you can reduce the risk of accidents and arrive at your destination safely, even in challenging winter weather. Remember, patience and caution are your best allies on snowy and icy roads.



# Golden Bears Take on STAC West Powers

By Hal Ehrhardt

The Vestal Swimming and Diving team opens 2024 with meets against the top three teams in the STAC West division. On Tuesday (results unavailable at press time), they travelled to Ithaca to take on the Little Red who fell to 2-3 following a loss at Union Endicott last week. Vestal opens the 2nd half of the season with a 2-2 record.

Next Tuesday, January 23rd, they are again on the road, at Corning. The 2-2 Hawks have lost to UE and ME by a combined 3 points. Last year they shared the Class A Sectional title with Horseheads. They are led by defending Class A diving champion Brenden Jardin-Reed and a number of underclassmen who are ranked in the Section 4 Top-25 in their events.

The following week (1/30), the undefeated Horseheads Blue Raiders will come to Vestal to finish off their dual meet season. The Golden Bears will look to even their STAC Metro record at 2-2 with a win over Binghamton on Senior Night in early February.

As the teams move through January, they are looking forward to peaking at the Section 4 championships in mid-February. The dual meets along with the Spartan Invitational in late January provide the Vestal swimmers a chance to earn a spot in the Golden Bear sectional lineup. Last year the Golden Bears finished in 5th place among the seven teams behind Horseheads, Corning, UE and Ithaca, while beating out Elmira and Binghamton in the Class A Sectionals. Maine Endwell and Chenango Forks will look to defend their Class B and C championships.

# January Go Green After Taking Down Your Christmas Tree At The End Of The Holiday Season! Choose From Options That Keep Your Tree Out Of The Landfill And Benefit Wildlife And The Planet:



Your municipality may offer a free tree collection or recycling program that will turn your tree into mulch or compost. Remember to remove all lights and decorations first. Contact your local department of public works to find out or look for an upcoming event.

If you have space in your yard, consider using your tree as a brush pile for the birds. Not only will the pile provide extra shelter for feathered friends during the cold winter months, but it'll also give you some excellent backyard bird-watching opportunities! Some farms accept Christmas trees for their goats to munch on the vitamin C rich needles. Be sure to confirm that the farm near you is currently accepting Christmas trees before considering this option. View tips on making your own brush pile and more outdoor tree disposal options.

# Highlights From The January 10th Vestal Town Board Meeting

## Privilege Of The Floor

Supervisor Sexton opened the privilege of the floor by stating that meetings will be run differently. The Town Board will be moving towards a lot more transparency and a lot more accountability. Supervisor Sexton stated that she is accountable to all as is the entire Town Board.

The Town Board will be doing online surveys, we are going to be doing the video taping of meetings and we are going to be enhancing our communication system on the website to allow people to get an answer when they have an issue, question or problem.

The Salary Schedule, as was noted in the Organizational Meeting, has been published. Salaries will be posted, just positions and salaries, not specific names. It is not a personal thing; a decision should never be made about which person is in what position. That decision should be made on how we spend our money as a town. That should be a public decision with the input of everyone in Vestal.

We have 3 new members of the Town Board including myself and two continuing members. We just found out this week that we have 4.55 million dollars that we need to spend that we do not have. Because of a lot of essentials that we need every year were not in the budget.

With that being said we will deal with it but we have a severe budget crisis. We have a plan and we will be fine this year but going forward budget, money and expenditures will be a serious consideration. The expenditures will be a public transparent discussion with full public involvement. We will not be making deals behind closed doors and we will not be making decisions without everyone having input on it and discussing it. This will not occur until we have a budget for the coming year.

The current budget is in place and will stay in place exactly as it is, as much as possible. There were considerations about the SRO program (SRO stands for School Resource Officer, a Police Officer who works in the Schools with the students and the staff to ensure safety in our schools). We have a wonderful SRO Program; our Police Chief and our SRO Police Officers are outstanding. Their program will continue exactly as it is and we are looking forward to enhancing it and we will have discussions. We hope to have the School totally involved in every decision that is made. But our children, our schools and safety will always be a priority and the safety of our residents as well. Our police force will always be fully staffed and will always be supported.

Supervisor Sexton then opened the floor to any questions or comments from the public. A member of the public spoke and stated that on Dec 6th, 2023 the Town Board approved the hiring of two new Police Officers. The first Officer was first on the hire list and the second Officer was third on the list and both Vestal residents. This member stated that they received a call from one of the new Police Officers family stating that their son wasn't going to get hired. This member of the public, asked how the Supervisor and the Town Board can say that they are for the SROs and the Police Department and then do this? This member stated that we have a top-notch SRO Program at our schools. The member concluded their statements by stating that she was embarrassed that this new Board would not hire these two fellows.

Supervisor Sexton stated that we have a budgetary crisis so therefore we have to think hard and responsibly with everything we do. In regards to the two Officers, the Board has not had a chance to talk about it concretely but the sense that the Supervisor got was that the majority of the board agree to resume the hiring of the Police Officers.

Another member of the public spoke asking about the Resolution regarding the two Officers. They directed their question to the Town Attorney Daniel Reynolds, asking if a Resolution was passed on those positions of Police Officers, who went through an official appointment through

the Civil Service Program, how could an approved Resolution be overturned to eliminate these positions without something being done towards the original resolution?

Typically for any action to be taken against a Resolution it has to be amended or dissolved to change a decision. Are we as a Town following municipality regulations and more seriously have we opened ourselves up for litigation? Supervisor Sexton stated that once again we have not taken an official vote, we would have raised it at this meeting. You are correct, if we were not going to proceed with the hire. I have a sense with the Town Board that we will be hiring these two Officers.

This member wanted it clarified that they would be starting on 1/15/2024? Supervisor Sexton stated that is correct. This member asked another question: would the part of the original transition that was outlined and approved by the prior Town Board to allow for two Senior Officers to transition to the open SRO positions?

Supervisor Sexton stated that going forward we have not even begun to speak to the Police Chief. We will be speaking and planning that together, about how the SRO program will be enhanced but it will be enhanced. We have a plan, we have several things but I can't talk concretely until I have a chance to talk to the Police Chief. We do know that we have a majority on the Board agreeing to hire those two men.

Cliff Kasson, Superintendent of Vestal Schools wanted to thank the Town Board for their great service to our town. Kasson wanted to echo the statements that have been made about the great SRO Program that we have in the schools.

When Kasson first came on we had one SRO and now we currently have four. The relationships that we have with our Vestal Police Department is next to none. Going forward Kasson would like to see the school have six SROs so that all six of our campuses would have a full time SRO in each building.

Supervisor Sexton stated that this is a priority. Chief Kintner and Sexton have begun to assess but once again everything must go through the Town Board. It is a wonderful program and we will work on it together and Sexton agrees expansion is wonderful as well.

A member of the public spoke regarding the SRO Program, this member understands the Town Boards concerns but he has firsthand knowledge that the protection the whole community receives and the students is a top-notch connection.

I know what you are thinking that other school districts are going with retired officers and going through the State Department, that does not give us the same protection.

This member states that he can call on these Officers at any time day or night with a situation with one of the students and they are right there. You can not get that with the retired police officers.

Supervisor Sexton stated that it is still a conversation and everything is still on the table. She knows from her conversations with Chief Kintner that any officer that is chosen will be hand picked and it will be the best possible person for the job. Chief wants to have the best for his department and to get the best possible person who will be fully engaged with students.

Sexton states that she will never advocate for saving a couple of dollars and not having someone who isn't excellent in that position.

Another member spoke in favor of the SRO Program and this member wanted to mention the summer Youth Academy that has grown exponentially and is a wonderful program. Another member spoke also about the SRO program. Stated that this program is more than just averting a crisis, its about a hug, a phone call or just showing up at one of their games, they are role models.

## Assessment Frustration

Another member of the public spoke about assessments and they were shocked that no one has brought it up. This member has applied for a lower assessment since 2009 and for 14 years he has applied and has been denied every time and believes it is from retaliation. This member believes that no other area is at 100% Assessment and believes that there is no need for it. This member has paid for an Appraisal and an Engineer's Report and has been denied by the Board of Assessment Review Committee. This member is hoping with this new administration that the retaliation he thinks he has received will stop. This member said he went to the SCAR hearing (Small Claims Court) and was denied there as well.

Supervisor Sexton stated that the Assessment has been a frustration for a tremendous amount of people because they were adjusted during a crazy housing market so they are very very high. Sexton stated that the housing market was expected to drop and it has not yet. However, all the experts say that it will. Now we have a plan, when Sexton went door to door last year she heard so much frustration from so many residents that it was clear that they were not getting answered to the level they wanted and secondarily with not being heard and not having an avenue to get help with it.

Supervisor Sexton stated that in the last week and a half, she has had a meeting with every Department Head and they are devising ways of dealing with a lot of the frustrations that are happening in Vestal and one of them is Assessments.

Sexton states that she will read verbatim for the record so those who aren't here will have a record of what she is about to say:

"The Assessment process is frustrating for many Vestal residents. Alleviating that frustration is a priority for the Vestal Town Board and the Vestal Town Assessor. Supervisor Sexton and the Town Assessors, Mark Minoia and Colleen Zube, are working cooperatively to achieve that goal. We have talked and sat down and we made a plan: Every resident if you are unhappy with your assessment or you don't understand it make an appointment with the Town Assessor for an informal assessment review. These reviews are conducted from October until January every year. An Assessor will meet with you individually to review your assessment, explain the assessment process, check the accuracy of the information that they have on record, and upon request, will conduct a walk-through of your residence. You may bring pictures or information to the meeting but it is not required, and you retain the right to file a grievance if you are not satisfied with that hearing. Property owners who would like to schedule an appointment are encouraged to call the Town Assessment Office at (607) 754-3314 to set up a meeting. They can only do it from October to January or as long as they can until they get into their really busy season and just don't have time. You have the right to go to Grievance or to court beyond that. Informal assessments will take the time to go over everything, they will listen to you and they will explain exactly what they did. That is one avenue. I know I have heard that have met and the specs were wrong and they adjusted that."

Sexton will also be speaking to the Board of Assessment Review when they are getting organized again. They are independent. Sexton stated that at the end of those hearings the residents have become very frustrated because they get a check on the sheet which says insufficient evidence or whatever and they don't understand why the ruling was done.

*"...Town Board Meeting" continued on next page...*



“...Town Board Meeting” continued from next page...

“I will work with them to ensure that they get an answer out, indicating what was missing and why they got the ruling that they did. If we need to provide someone to help them to do that we can. They can verbally tell them or put it in writing for the resident we will do that as well. But at the end of the hearing everyone should understand what happened and if they are not satisfied the Assessor will take a look at it again and you can make an appointment with them again. You always have the right to go to Civil Court. You have not given up any of your rights by pursuing any of these options. I would highly suggest it. Plan ahead and it will be a work in progress but I feel assured that people will tell me how it is going.”

A member of the public spoke and stated that as was mentioned Civil Court is an option. This member went through this whole process and got very frustrated and an independent certified State assess my house way lower. He went through the process twice and got no where and contacted a lawyer who with one phone call got his assessment lowered.

This member states that he was told that you can get it lowered but it can be changed again after two years. Supervisor Sexton stated she heard him and has spoken to the Assessor. The market is expected to go down and the when that does the assessments will go down as well and be adjusted.

Another member of the public wanted to know who would be on the committee for Code. They have a concern about a property that has been condemned and should have been addressed in 2021 by Code and is still there. Supervisor Sexton stated that she has heard about a number of abandoned houses and there are many different code issues.

Supervisor Sexton stated that many of the current Town Codes were written in the 1960s and are frustrating to our residents, businesses and Town employees. Our Code Enforcement Inspectors will begin to review our Town Codes in order to improve them. Please understand, though, all possible changes must be carefully considered, changes cannot happen quickly. The process, though, will begin.

We will begin at the most frustrating ones first. We plan to address this with the owners directly, these properties are owned privately and their taxes are paid up. These houses itself have been boarded up.

At that time the Supervisor closed the Privilege of the Floor portion of the meeting.

## \$4.55 MILLION CRISIS?

A member of the public spoke and wanted to discuss a different topic regarding the \$4.55 million crisis that we are in, would that information be shared on the website what that crisis is?

This member stated that when they left the Town Board in 2023 we had a \$3.8 million in Reserve a budget going into 2024 that reduced expenses. We had Increased revenue, sales tax revenue was through the roof and we received the Town of Distinction through New York State Audits.

Supervisor Sexton stated that information would be available online, that the Capital Projects were not included or accounted for in the 2024 Budget, and our reserves are basically at the minimum.

As you know it's basically like a savings account, in case of an emergency. If that flood that we just almost had or the snow we just had were really bad and we had to pay a ton of money for it and we didn't get reimbursed, we would have needed those reserves. The amount we currently have is the recommended amount and we really can't touch that.

There is no other money in the budget to pay for the bills that are coming due which are excessive, they are capital expenditures. In Engineering \$1.25 Million in Capital Projects and that is just our part. Our Engineer

gets as much money as possible through grants. These grants are for 90% and sometimes 85% of the cost of the projects. The projects that are coming due this year are the Main St Bridge and the Rail Trail. Again, most of that was paid for but we still have to pay the rest this year.

In addition, the Highway/Parks Department capital is approximately \$2.3 Million which is not negotiable we need to pave our roads. We all know that the roads need to be paved and the only way that can be done is additional money that isn't in the budget.

These are only what the basics are; we have equipment that is just too old and needs to be replaced. We have an amazing Superintendent of Highways. He uses everything and is as efficient as you possibly can be but when stuff gets really old it has to be replaced, old equipment sold at auction. These are not new and flashy items, they are essential.

Sexton stated that we were unexpectedly given the Greenway to maintain. The Greenway goes between BU to Binghamton, and we do not have the equipment to maintain that area properly. We had to invest in two small trucks to be able to maintain that area. These trucks will also be used throughout the year in different areas. The Highway Department also had a heating system that they fixed themselves which saved a considerable amount of money.

These things are necessary and were not accounted for in the 2024 Budget and there are no Reserves. We can handle it, we will do Bonds. However, as you go more into debt you have to pay more every year. These are strong considerations that going forward will be done differently. Capital Projects will be built into the Budget every single year.

We will do everything in our power to keep everything we would like to have in Vestal. However, we have to account for the bills. We cannot keep going into debt with Bonds every year or spending the Reserves. We are going to plan better.

Sexton states that she has talked to all the Department Heads this past week and a half and have met the most amazing people who go above and beyond. Sexton says that the Town will be doing a five-year Capital Plan. Every budget will be a public conversation and every aspect will be made public. There will be as much input from as many people as possible. Going forward is going to be tough but we just need to plan better.

Sexton addressed the member of the public who asked the question and asked for any input they may have, any suggestions for the Town Board that would hopefully help us out. This member of the public had one closing comment: that the Reserves were between 18 and 20% in December 2023. Councilwoman Messina and Councilman Donnelly can confirm that.

We also have to consider incoming revenue. Do we know what the fourth quarter Sales Tax was? This member suggested that it is in the neighborhood of \$3-4 Million and hopes that is being taken in account in regards to our deficit. Supervisor Sexton stated that it absolutely is.

We will do bonds if we have to. We can count on income but as we all know we have to prepare for the worst-case scenario. But going forward our priority is every single resident of Vestal, we want everyone's input and hopefully to be much more transparent. That will be a work in progress for a little bit.

Moving forward it will be a public conversation about how we proceed but we can do a lot we just need to plan. This member agreed that a five-year plan is a good way to start and commended the Board for it.

Another member of the public who is also an employee expressed concern about the financial crisis of the budget. Supervisor Sexton stated that word crisis may have been an overstatement and we will handle it and get through this.



## Vestal Fire Changes

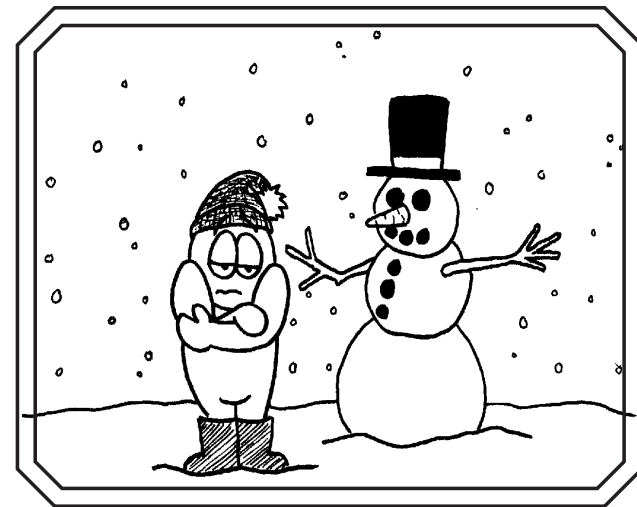
On a motion by Councilman Donnelly and seconded by Councilwoman Messina, the following was ADOPTED:

Sexton, Messina, Donnelly, Miller, Greene Ayes: 5; Nays: 0

Councilwoman Messina wanted it clarified that this item and the one to follow pertains to the Vestal Fire Department. R2024-06 Approval of Guidelines and Duties of the Governance Committee as follows: - Town Supervisor/ current Chair of the Board of Fire Commissioners shall stipulate full cooperation with the Governance Committee by the Fire District Secretary, Fire Department Chief and Fire Department President. - The Governance Committee will establish a list of duties and objectives and communicate the objectives to the Fire Department and Town Supervisor/ Chair of the current Fire District. - Governance Committee meetings may be bi-monthly or as necessary to set forth the future of the Vestal Fire District. - The Governance Committee will assess the current fire district assets, policy, employees, records, and finances. The Governance Committee will identify gaps and recommend improvements.

All members of the Governance Committee will work to obtain the necessary training as recommended by state Fire District Law. - Governance Committee Chair will report back to the Town Supervisor (Chair of the Board of Fire Commissioners) and brief the Fire Department President on progress of the committee. The Chairman will make the Fire Chief aware of any anomalies as they are determined, especially if they create a risk to fire department operations. - Governance Committee Chair shall provide a brief update (as appropriate) on activities to the members of the Vestal Fire Department through the President at fire department monthly department meetings.

Upon the determination and recommendation of the NY State Comptroller's Office; the Vestal Town Board will dissolve the current Vestal Fire District and conduct public hearings as necessary to meet compliance to state Fire District Law. Established by Resolution a new Town of Vestal Fire District. - The Governance Committee shall manage the district, establish policy and procedures for the new Fire District. Then communicate the policy to the Fire Department Chief and Fire Department President. - The Governance Committee shall determine the new Town of Vestal Fire District budget for fiscal year 2025. Provide the Town with a tax levy for the 2025 Fire Tax. - There shall be a public election of a new Board of Fire Commissioners for the Town of Vestal Fire District in December of 2024. - The Governance Committee shall transfer the management of the Fire District to the newly elected Board of Fire Commissioners. The Governance Committee shall be released from duty.





## Chocolate Bar Sale At Lowe's In Vestal

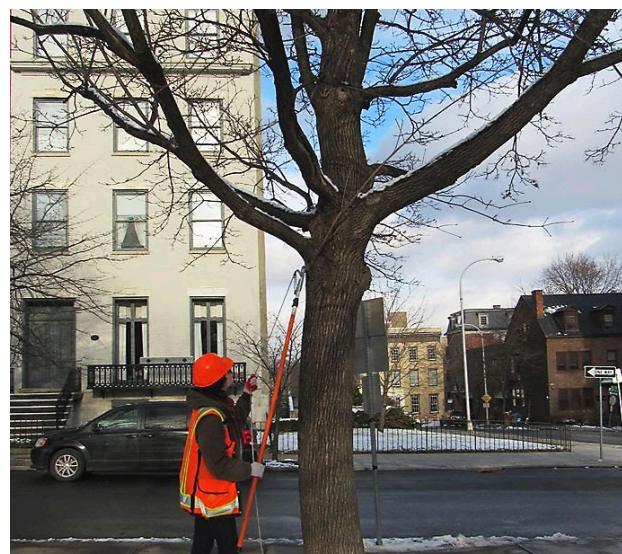
On Saturday, January 20 from 10am to 2pm, the Band Boosters will be selling (hopefully) the last of our Gertrude Hawk chocolate at the Lowes store in Vestal. In order to accomplish this, we need HELP from adults and band members alike! Please consider helping out, even if it is for a couple of hours!! every little bit helps!

Lowe's Home Improvement (225 Sycamore Road, Vestal, NY)

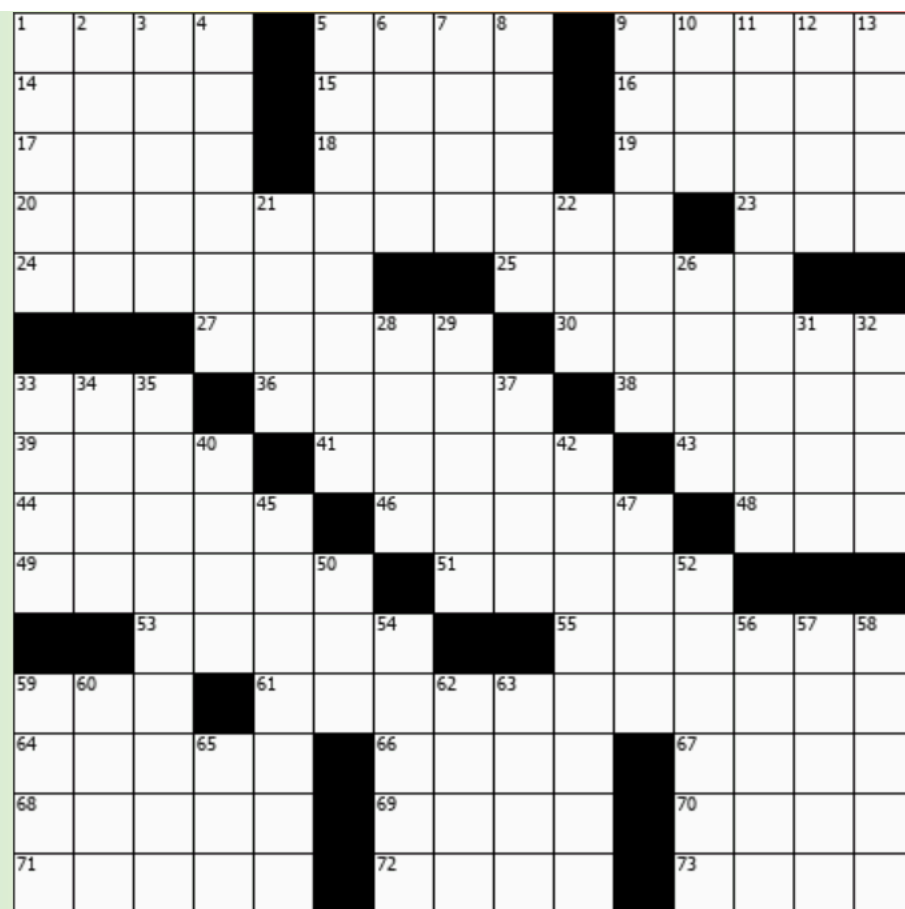
## Need to Prune a Tree? Now Is a Good Time

Do you have a tree that needs pruning? Winter is a great time to make any necessary cuts. Not only is it easier to assess a tree without its leaves, but pruning when insects are not active helps lower the risk of a fungus or disease entering the pruning wound.

Want to know more, or wondering how to go about your planned pruning? "How to Do It Right and Protect Your Trees" by Christina McLaughlin will be in next week's paper.



1. Rude response
5. Auction site
9. Houlihan's rank
14. 1949 defense org.
15. Ivy League university
16. Public persona
17. One of Lawrence's men
18. And others, abbreviated
19. Move crabwise
20. Former U.S. Open tennis site
23. Comic strip sound
24. Like most green tomatoes
25. Crouch
27. Blanks' fitness program
30. Kopecks' superiors
33. Broadway abbreviation
36. Irish and oyster, e.g.
38. Ornamental coronet
39. Certain car payment
41. Divine rings
43. Tizzy
44. Trojan saga
46. Instruct
48. Pebble Beach prop
49. Accelerated (with "up")
51. Common characteristic
53. Have some home cooking
55. Peruse again
59. Creative course
61. Ireland's nickname
64. Becker of tennis
66. Part of a military command



67. Quark's place
  68. Happening
  69. Mild expletive
  70. Carson's successor
  71. Wintry numbers
  72. Sapphire's mo.
  73. Exercises one's pupils
- Puzzle Grid  
Down
1. Muddlement
  2. All-time homer leader
  3. Beatle surname
  4. "Amen"
  5. Some canines
  6. Photo solution
  7. Jai \_\_\_\_
  8. Whoops and hollers
  9. Blow an opportunity
  10. End of Jack's boast
  11. Succulent household shrub
  12. Cad's look
  13. Give off, as an odor
  21. Where people shape up
  22. Env. enclosure
  26. Kyoto ties
  28. Rhythm
  29. Little hooter
  31. Pennsylvania port
  32. Fully satisfy
  33. Show life
  34. Hollywood opening?
  35. Source for a symbol of peace
  37. Plummet's opposite
  40. Volcanic effluent
  42. Rhett's belle
  45. Profoundly dislikes
  47. Hurried
  50. Kind of wit or view
  52. Ordeals
  54. Meeting them is a good thing
  56. Cosmetics first name
  57. Sans companions
  58. Audition tapes
  59. Connive with a criminal
  60. Go from pillar to post
  62. Barely done
  63. Promptness
  65. Wayside stop

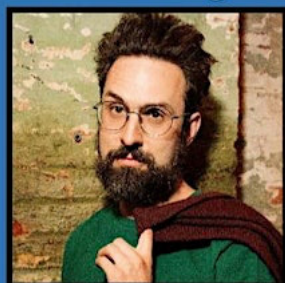
8:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 20

Tickets: \$10 pre-sale; \$15 at the door

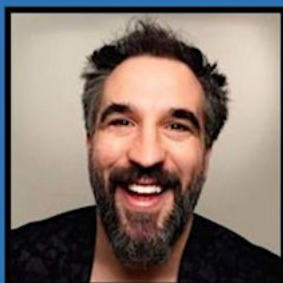
## Crooked Mouth Brewing Comedy Showcase



MacLain Naumann



Doogie Horner



Steve Wrigley



Stephen Brown

Seating: 7 p.m. Tickets on Eventbrite and at the bar. 231 Vestal Ave., Endicott, N.Y.



## Emerald Fire

The Vestal Winterguard will be hosting its home show, Emerald Fire, on Saturday, February 3rd at Vestal Senior High School. The show starts at 5:00 and tickets are \$10 General Admission, \$8 Seniors/Students, Children 5 and under are free.

