

CONTINUED FROM THE COVER

Montessori

From B1

the way, according to its website. The Western New York site is set back from North French Road, just off the Millersport Highway exit, next door to the North French Soccer Complex. The building previously housed Four Seasons Child Care Center.

Styers, who spent a decade at Nardin Academy’s Montessori & Me before applying to lead the new entity in Getzville, said Peninsula’s breadth of options should set it apart locally. Full-day infant



SOPHIA BUONPANE, BUFFALO NEWS

“Water playing and food are the way to a toddler’s heart. You’ve got those two things, and you’ve got a best friend forever,” says Jessie Styers, in the new toddler room at Peninsula Montessori Academy.

and toddler programs are common at Montessori schools across the coun-try, she said, but Peninsu-

la’s offerings mark the first of their kind in Buffalo. A larger goal is to become an accredited Montessori school within three years, for which Styers will work with Peninsula Regional Director Meghan Rosenfeld.

Peninsula will follow the Amherst Central Schools calendar and will run 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Families can choose between half and full days and have the option to pay by the month.

Each room will be led by a primary teacher or care-taker, as well as an assis-tant, with a maximum of

eight kids in the infants room and 10 in the tod-dler room. The size of the preschool room depends on the breakdown of ages among those enrolled.

Two of the three pri-mary teachers are already Montessori certified, Styers said, and the third is pursuing certification. Peninsula has the space to gradually expand to two in-fant, four toddler and three preschool rooms, she said. Lower elementary options could be added, too.

Styers seeks to deepen the ranks of Montes-sori-certified teachers in the area by launching a nonprofit organization

focused on preparing in-structors for the birth to 3 years old group. She is al-ready an instructor for the Buffalo Montessori Teacher Education Program, which prepares teachers for ages 3 to 6 in Clarence. Ideally, the training program will create a pipeline of care-takers for infant and tod-dler rooms across the area, which Styers anticipates expanding in the future.

She’s excited about the possibilities. Her enthu-siasm is most evident as she describes the room for toddlers, whom she has worked with for much of the last decade.

“It’s magical,” she said.

Higgins

From B1

newsman and actor worked at anchor desks around the coun-try, from Buffalo to Los Angeles and back again. I called him because when I think of Beard’s voice, I think of a classic broad-caster’s baritone with no dis-cernible regional tells.

But on the telephone, his North Carolina roots come shin-ing through.

“When I first moved here (in the late 1970s), people in Buffalo would say, ‘What’s going on with that accent?’” Beard said. “And I would say ‘What accent?’”

Even in the world of broadcast news, Beard said he’s heard all kinds of regional variations as



BUFFALO NEWS FILE PHOTO

Retired Channel 2 anchor John Beard said when he first arrived in Buffalo, he’d get asked about his North Carolina accent. “What accent?” he would reply.

he worked around the country. He thinks that the standards of broadcasting today aren’t

as restrictive when it comes to training TV newspeople to sound “neutral,” or free of any accent.

“I think as long as the way you sound is understandable to people and is professional, your accent won’t be a problem,” he said.

Perhaps more people have come to understand that every-one speaks with some kind of ac-cent. There’s no baseline version of English that’s more correct than any other. It all depends on who is speaking to whom, and what message they are trying to send.

Our particular variety of En-glish in Buffalo is shaped by what linguists call the Northern Cities Vowel Shift, Schechter explained. That’s why some say “melk,” for “milk,” and why

some of us pronounce “cot” and “caught” as two distinctly dif-ferent words. You hear that kind of speech across the Great Lakes – in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland – though we all might insist we sound nothing alike.

The Buffalo variety also re-flects our immigration story. In the 19th and 20th centuries, German, Irish, Italian and Polish immigrants formed enclaves and left imprints on local speech. Add in Black American English, the flavors and variety of more recent immigration, and all the intermingling social layers, and you end up with something deeply regional and complex.

“People from the East Side and South Buffalo and Amherst might all sound different from each other,” Schechter said. “And

yet, they’ll still share some core features. That’s what makes Buf-falo English so interesting. It’s not just one thing.”

I write a newspaper column, not a Sunday sermon. But there’s something comforting in this: We speak in order to mark our-selves as members of a group, just as we do with how we dress, what music we listen to and the teams we root for.

And the reason we want to be-long to a group is simple. It’s so we know who we are. So we know where we are. It’s so when we ask for a half-pound of Krakus ham after Mass at St. Stan’s, the per-son behind the counter nods, and says something that reassures us that we are in the right place. That we are Home. Something like, “Go Bills.”

Marina

From B1

marina slips, when the top metal bar on his boat hoist touched a high-voltage line running overhead.

The surge of electric-ity knocked Bogнар to the ground, and a customer who came upon him called 911, according to a report from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Adminis-tration, which cited the ma-rina for two safety violations following an investigation into Bogнар’s death.

In a lawsuit filed last summer, Bogнар’s survivors blame the fatal accident on National Grid, arguing the utility was negligent in fail-ing to properly brace the pole that carried the power lines, insulate the lines or ensure the lines were held up high enough, the complaint states.

National Grid, in its re-sponse, denies the allega-tions, contending “the acci-dent was entirely the result” of Bogнар’s own actions.

The Bognars and the uti-lity also have sparred in legal filings over land ownership and access issues on and around the marina prop-erty, a dispute that has led to National Grid’s pursuit of eminent domain.

The late Mike Bogнар met his wife, Kerin, at the ma-rina, then known as Placid Harbor I, and the pair pur-chased it in 1986.

At the time, their marina operated on the south side of the harbor while a separate oil-refining dock operated



PROVIDED PHOTO

This image, included in a court filing, shows the boat lift at Mid River Marina that James M. Bogнар Sr. was operating shortly before he was electrocuted on Aug. 3, 2022.

on the north side.

National Grid has long owned property to the east of the marina site, where the utility has transmission lines and conductors con-nected to the switchyard for the former Huntley power plant, still a key part of its electrical network, and a distribution line running to the marina.

National Grid granted an easement in 1986, updated in 1987, allowing Mid River employees access to a por-tion of the utility’s property.

Sometime after, Mid River constructed a wraparound road connecting the boat slips on its south sides with the north-side dock, which the Bognars purchased in the early 1990s.

The Bognars constructed new buildings and extended sewer, water and electric-ity lines into both sides of the harbor, their attorney, Christopher Poole, said at a public hearing, according to

a transcript.

The marina has 280 boat slips, including 120 on the north side, and the business needs access to both sides to remain viable, Poole said.

Eminent domain’s ‘hard edge’

Eminent domain allows governments to take con-trol of private property for a public purpose, but the entity must pay fair value for this property, said Me-konnen Ayano, an associate professor of law at the Uni-versity at Buffalo.

This power also applies to utilities seeking to build a substation or distribution line, Ayano said, and prop-erty owners rarely succeed in blocking an eminent do-main legal filing if the entity demonstrates it is paying sufficient compensation and the underlying project provides a public good.

“That’s the hard edge of eminent domain law: It pro-protects your right to be paid, not your right to keep the property,” Ayano said.

At the public hearing held on June 26 at the Brighton Place Library in the town, Mark McNamara, an attor-ney for National Grid, laid out some maintenance the utility plans to do near the marina.

The utility’s plans include burying one overhead distri-bution line that runs into a pole sitting on the edge of the marina property, re-placing this pole and raising a second overhead distribu-tion line nearby, McNamara said. He said National Grid also plans to set up a barrier along the outer edge of the marina’s wraparound road to block it off from the ad-joining, utility-owned land to the east.

National Grid must turn to eminent domain, he said, to address overlapping land ownership and disputes over previously granted ease-ments. For example, the marina and utility each own different portions of the sin-gle driveway that leads from River Road to the marina.

First, National Grid seeks to take a thin, 15-foot-wide “splinter” segment that stretches 220 feet east from the marina property across the wraparound road and under its power lines.

Second, it would keep in place the marina’s 1980s-era easements but restrict them to granting access to the main drive-way and to the two sides of the harbor via the concrete

wraparound road.

Third, National Grid seeks its own easement confirm-ing it has the right to use the driveway, as well as ease-ments allowing for work on the two distribution lines and the pole replacement.

“This reconfiguration ... would provide more effi-cient ingress and egress for marina staff and visitors to the inlet’s north side,” said Bertola, the utility’s spokes-person. “It would also im-prove National Grid’s abil-ity to maintain nearby power lines and other equipment, and ensure the continued delivery of safe, reliable electricity to our customers, including the marina.”

Compromise urged

Poole, the Bognars’ at-torney in the eminent do-main proceeding, deemed National Grid’s use of this legal provision flawed and unnecessary.

He said the utility had, prior to the hearing, released little concrete information about its plans, and what it did provide left the fate of the marina in question.

Bognar-Langenfeld and her brother Jeffrey Bogнар brought a framed photo of their late father to the hear-ing.

The Bognars said their le-gal fight with National Grid and steps taken by the utility following the fatal accident – such as temporarily shut-ting off power to the marina – has cost them significant money and lost business.

“They’ve been strong-arming us since the

day my husband died – non-stop,” Kerin Bogнар said.

Jeffrey Bogнар said Na-tional Grid’s proposal would, for example, limit their ability to store boats on utility property, something the marina has done for de-cades without issue.

“They’re trying to, obvi-ously, put a family business out of business,” he said, noting the company has had to scale back its workforce.

He acknowledged that some safety improvements need to be made, in light of the accident that killed his father, but insisted Na-tional Grid is using this as an excuse to take away the marina’s long-held rights.

The Bognars said nego-tiations have gone nowhere as they confront unreasonable financial demands from the utility.

“Grid does not want to settle. They want what they want. That’s my perspec-tive and my experience,” Bogнар-Langenfeld said.

It’s early in the eminent domain process, which also requires an appraisal of the property’s value and nego-tiations to try to reach a vol-untary purchase agreement before National Grid can go to court.

But hearing participants like Grand Island resident Kevin Hagen urged the much wealthier National Grid to try to resolve their issues with the marina fairly and without further escalation.

“Let’s get the safety issues addressed and move on, you know, because it’s a horri-ble, horrible situation and nobody is winning,” he said.

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