



## Legislature recognizes women in leadership roles

The Albany County Legislature, joined by County Executive Daniel P. McCoy, celebrated Women's History Month on March 22 by recognizing the women who head the various departments for the extraordinary work they do to move the County forward. See more on pages A2 and A3.

## County officials, community groups announce revitalization initiatives and say 'Welcome back to Albany's South End'

Albany County Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce was joined by County Executive Daniel P. McCoy, District 6 Legislator Samuel Fein, and representatives from community groups to announce collaborative efforts to revitalize the South End, joining forces to say, "Welcome Back to Albany's South End."

The press conference was held March 5 at the former St. John's Church at 142 Green St., a property that the Albany County Legislature approved in February to convey to Chiou Development Group. In attendance was Patrick Chiou, CEO of Chiou Development Group, Jahkeen Hoke, Executive Director of AVillage and co-founder of 4<sup>th</sup> Family; and Travon

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*Jahkeen Hoke, Executive Director of AVillage and co-founder of 4th family, speaks about the South End during a press conference on March 5. Also in attendance, from left, is County Executive Daniel P. McCoy, Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce, Legislator Samuel Fein and Cynthia Herback, Executive Director of South End Improvement Corp.*

# Albany County celebrates Women's History Month



**Lucille McKnight**  
**District 1**

Elected in 1992, McKnight is the longest tenured African American woman to serve in the state. She has served as President of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), and Chairwoman of the Albany County Youth Board. McKnight has been instrumental in updating the County's Affirmative Action Policy.



**Wanda Willingham**  
**District 3**

Re-elected in 2016, Willingham is serving her fourth term. Passionate about public service, she is a lifelong resident of Albany and dedicated member of Mount Olive Southern Baptist Church. Willingham serves as Deputy Chairwoman of the Albany County Legislature and the Legislative Black Caucus.



**Norma Chapman**  
**District 4**

Elected in 2008, Chapman is serving her third term. She is the founder of the Frank Chapman Memorial Institute. Chapman also established the West Hill newsletter providing residents with information about issues and accomplishments in the community.



**Lynne Lekakis**  
**District 8**

Lekakis is currently serving her first term in the Legislature. She currently serves as the facilities coordinator at Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood. Lekakis is also a partner at the consulting firm Kane & Lekakis, where she applies her organization, facilitation, and program management skills to organizations in the Capital Region.



**Patrice Lockart**  
**District 26**

Lockart is serving her third term as a legislator. She also serves as trustee in the Village of Colonie. For over 30 years, she worked as the Victim Specialist for the Colonie Police Department. She is also the founder and current Advisory Board member of the Colonie Youth Court.



**Joanne Cunningham**  
**District 34**

Cunningham is serving her first term as a legislator. She also serves as a statewide health care policy leader. She has extensive experience in the policy and legislative environment in Washington, D.C., having held positions in the US House of Representatives, US Senate and in the office of former Maryland Gov. William Donald Schaefer



**Victoria Plotsky**  
**District 38**

Plotsky is the newest member of the legislature after winning a special election in 2018. A past president of the Delmar Rotary Club, Plotsky has raised thousands of dollars for charities locally and overseas. She lived in Moscow for two years after college. In 1992, she came home to attend Albany Law School and graduated in 1995.

For more about the Albany County Legislators, visit  
<http://www.albanycounty.com/legislature/legislators.aspx>

# Albany County celebrates Women's History Month



*Legislator Norma Chapman recognizes Deb Riitano, of the Albany County Department for Aging.*



*Karen Ziegler, Director of the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center, speaks about her department.*



*Cornell Cooperative Extension Executive Director Lisa Godlewski thanks the County for the recognition.*



*County Executive Daniel P. McCoy recognizes Gail Geohagen-Pratt, Commissioner of the Albany County Department of Children Youth and Families.*



*Karen Storm, purchasing agent for Albany County, speaks during the event.*



*Laura DeGaetano, Senior Natural Resource Planner, speaks during the event.*



*Legislator Lynne Lekakis honors Commissioner Jennifer Clement, of the Department of Human Resources.*



*Commissioner Elizabeth Whalen, of the Department of Health, speaks during the event.*



*Legislator Sean Ward recognizes Director Maggie Alix, of the Real Property Tax Agency.*

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Jackson, President of BlueLight Development Group and Executive Director of the African American Cultural Center, who shared other investment initiatives that are underway in the South End.

“No single organization has all the answers or all the assets needed to revitalize a neighborhood. Each of these opportunities relies on collaboration,” Chairman Andrew Joyce said. “We demonstrated that with three resolutions passed in February – to convey St. John’s Church to Chiou Development Group who will invest to redevelop the property; to update our disposition plan so future foreclosed properties can be put back on the tax rolls quickly; and to relocate the Board of Elections to South Pearl Street. We will demonstrate that collaboration again as we welcome more and more people, investors and businesses back to the South End.”

“As the foreclosing governmental unit for the entire County, my staff and I are in a unique position to balance the needs and desires of the diverse communities of the County. Our aging historic city neighborhoods are some of the most beautiful, yet challenging cases we face. Disinvestment, absentee landlords, vacancy all combine to create a perfect storm that threatens their very existence,” said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy. “We work diligently on a daily basis to market properties many consider unattractive, such as the old St. John’s Church, to capable and proven individuals or businesses who have shown a desire to not only help these distressed neighborhoods, but the commitment to take on their most challenging properties. It’s great news that Chiou Development Group, 4th Family and the African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region, Inc. can work with us to help revitalize the South End.”

Chiou Development Group CEO Patrick Chiou announced Tuesday he expects to invest approximately \$3 million to turn the former church into approximately 20 affordable housing units.

“This is will be the first of its kind of adaptive reuse of a church. I believe this will be a unique project that will mix new and old together to make it a wonderful and innovative project,” Patrick Chiou said. “We have our work cut out for us in the future but we will be making this a successful addition to the City of Albany and to the South End.”

Cynthia Herback, Executive Director of South End Improvement Corp., announced that the organization recently received over \$1 million to fund homeowner rehabilitation projects for property homeowners right in the South End.

Jahkeen Hoke, Executive Director of AVillage, added there are ongoing discussions with the Albany County



**Patrick Chiou, CEO of Chiou Development Group, talks about the redevelopment of St. John’s Church. Travon Jackson, President of BlueLight Development Group, speaks on other opportunities underway in the South End.**

Legislature and other governmental groups regarding projects that will directly impact the South End, including a bike path, investment to improve Lincoln Park and a potential grocery store.

“The private sector of investors in development and the political will of our government leaders is going to drive the change in our neighborhood.” Hoke said. “I really think that our city and our neighborhood are moving forward specifically in the South End, and investments like this really capitalize on the opportunities that exist.”

According to Travon Jackson, President of BlueLight Development Group and Executive Director of the African American Cultural Center, an expansion project is underway at the African American Cultural Center, which serves as a community center for the neighborhood. There is also a stabilization project at what was known as School 17 on Second Ave., which is expected to be converted into public mixed use.

“Everyone is here today because we believe in the South End.” Jackson said. “In the case of this neighborhood, if we can all look to build up spaces our community deserves, if we can all look to invest where there may not be profit, with a direct result to a child or family that lives in that neighborhood, we will all be better off.”

District 6 Samuel Fein stated, “The rehabilitation and development of St. John’s church gives hope to the residents of the South End. This beautiful historic church, which many assumed was destined for demolition, will now be restored and integrated back into the community. I am excited about local community groups working with business and government to create a real vision for the South End that fits the needs of residents today and in the future, and provides economic opportunity for residents.”

## Happy anniversary to the Legislative Black Caucus!



The Legislative Black Caucus celebrated its 1-year anniversary on March 11 with a reception outside the Legislative Chambers at the Albany County Courthouse. LEFT: LBC Chairman listens as Legislator Norma Chapman speaks. CENTER: Deputy Chairwoman Wanda Willingham, LBC Chairman William Clay, Legislator Lucille McKnight, Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce and Legislator Samuel Fein. RIGHT: Legislator Lucille McKnight speaks as LBC Chair William Clay looks on.

## County legislators call for DOCCS to halt expansion project

Albany County Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce and Legislator Gary Domalewicz called on the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to halt work on its nearly \$40 million expansion project at the Albany Training Academy on New Scotland Road and modify plans to incorporate feedback provided at a recent public meeting.

Joyce and Domalewicz attended a meeting on March 27, held by the Normans Kill Neighborhood Association, where DOCCS representatives presented information about the project, and residents asked questions and presented their concerns. However, with construction already started on site, there are questions about how much of the public's feedback will be considered.

"There were a lot of justifiable concerns raised – from the lack of pedestrian safety to impacts on the sewer and water systems – concerns, that if DOCCS had sought the public's input earlier, they could have resolved before construction even started," Joyce said. "I am asking them to halt construction on this project, or if they can't stop the work, to at least consider modifying their plans to incorporate the concerns they heard at the meeting."

DOCCS is expanding on its campus at 1134 New Scotland Ave. to include a 64,500 square-foot structure for housing and classrooms, a new 13,570 square-foot gymnasium and a storage building. Plans also call for more parking and improvements to traffic patterns.

Residents raised concerns about the lack of information regarding an Environmental Impact Assessment, citing



Albany County Legislature Chairman Andrew Joyce speaks out against the DOCCS expansion project during a press conference on March 26. He is joined by County Executive Daniel P. McCoy, left, and District 10 Legislator Gary Domalewicz.

current flooding issues with the Normans Kill that runs through the neighborhood, along with the stress on the sewer system due to the increase usage. Other concerns involved the potential impact to traffic and the community due to the increased population at the Academy.

To address pedestrian safety, Joyce suggested DOCCS close the entrance at the rear of the Academy that leads to McCormack Road and install a pedestrian walkway since no sidewalk exists currently. He also echoed residents' calls for reconfiguring the parking at the rear of the facility, due to the potential impact on the neighborhood.

"DOCCS talks about being a good neighbor. If they want to be a good neighbor, they should seriously look at the impact to the surrounding neighborhoods and take these concerns to heart," Joyce said.



**Albany County Legislature is now accepting applications for its**

## **Legislative Grants Program**

### **What is it?**

The Legislative Grants Program provides funding for community-based organizations so they can continue their mission and meet the needs of the community.

### **What is the criteria?**

Applicants must show how the funding would be used and the project must be sponsored by at least one Albany County Legislator.

### **What will be considered?**

Upon review of each application, the Albany County Legislature will consider the extent to which the program:

- \* Addresses an emergency or urgent challenge or opportunity for the applicant;
- \* Provides assistance to disadvantaged people or places;
- \* Has a funding match from other sources;
- \* Has support from more than a single Legislator; and
- \* Award does not exceed \$3,500 per Legislator supporting the application.

**Deadline: April 12, 2019**

To apply: See an Albany County Legislator or log on to the Legislature website at:  
[http://albanycounty.com/Government/Departments/CountyLegislature/legislative\\_grants.aspx](http://albanycounty.com/Government/Departments/CountyLegislature/legislative_grants.aspx)

