

Date: 1/7/99  
To: All RCS Staff  
From: Chris Manaseri  
Subject: New Year Payday update

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*At the first paycheck of the New Year in 1998, I highlighted three potential impacts on our school community that might transpire in what is now last year - a youth home at the north end of the depot, the sale of lakefront land belonging to the Army and a potential prison. Now, as you'll read, might be a good time to update all of us on what we know about those prospects for 1999, as two of the three are all but done deals for the new year....*

On Monday night of this week I was invited to attend an initial meeting of a Community Planning Task Force for "the proposed 750-cell maximum security correctional facility to be located at the Seneca Army Depot in Romulus". My invitation from the Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services was dated December 15th and received on the 21st. I told the Board I would be attend as their representative when they met on the 22nd. I then showed up at Camp Edgemere on the grounds of the Willard Drug Treatment Center, not knowing what to really expect. I get invited to a lot of meetings, and I figured this one would be an interesting group: what I didn't reckon was how interesting this particular meeting was going to be.

I'm a pretty literate person. I read the papers and try to know what's going on. I subscribe to weekly news magazines. I even have email and internet access. I sometimes read whole books that aren't even assigned for my graduate classes. But somehow I missed this one. Now I knew there was talk of a prison coming to our area from the debates and forums held here in our school two years ago when the consideration was around former Sampson Developmental Center lands south of the park. And I had read a few things about a potential for including a prison proposal in the reuse plan for the depot after community sentiment seemed to favor that land over lakefront. I had even read about a public presentation of an environmental impact statement about a potential prison on depot land to be held this Friday night the 8th (yes a Friday night! Isn't that inviting?) What I was not prepared for was what I learned this past Monday night. And that is...

Advertising for bids for the construction of this 750-cell, 1500 inmate "new generation" maximum security prison will be sent out Wednesday the 6th (yesterday if you get this check like most of us do on Thursday). Bids will be opened February 4th and awarded in March. After an 18-month construction period, the yet-to be -named facility will open in August of 2000 - **read NEXT summer** - employing some 638 people full-time and another anticipated 109 part-time. The facility will be sheltered from vision from the main road, and located in the extreme south east corner of the current depot property. An access road 1.5 miles long will be built south of the Coast Guard LORAN tower on route 96, about half way between Romulus and Ovid, near West Blaine Road. The Department of Corrections will take over 675 acres of the nearly 11,000 acre depot property and use 124 acres for the facility itself, surrounding it with scrub and wetlands. The entire property will be surrounded with a 4-foot property line fence, and the facility itself will be double fenced with an 8' interior fence separated from a 16' exterior fence by 30' of no man's land lighted and cameraed. The site was selected from five potential pieces of depot land because of its location and levelness. The "new generation" prison will be similar to the current construction occurring in Malone and will feature two inmates per cell with a toilet and shower and rec area attached, rather than communal showers and rec areas characterizing most older prisons (and our school). The 1500 inmate capacity is about average in size for maximum security facilities in New York. New York operates some 70 prisons of various sizes and inmate capacity design. There will not be a death row or execution chamber in the new facility (I asked). Now isn't THAT news! This is fact, not rumor - watch!

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On the other side (literally- excuse the pun) we have a new development on the North end property - what used to be the troop area. At a recent meeting on BOCES special ed space planning, I was asked what I knew about the once proposed Chapter 81 school on the north end of the depot. ( Private school for juvenile delinquents and other adjudicated children). The old YSI proposal which was hot news last January evaporated when unions caught wind of a for-profit edging in on their turf in New York State. However, a non-profit outfit called Kidspace ( Karyn Sabara used to work for them, and they're on the web a [www.kidspace.org](http://www.kidspace.org)) out of Pennsylvania is very much alive in the planning stages. All of this is supposed to be quiet waiting for final blessing and an announcement by Senator Nozzolio's office, but I placed a call to State Ed about this when BOCES asked the question.

The word I got there is that there is a great deal of political pressure being applied and that Roland Smiley, the State Ed worker whose job it is to approve all such facilities, had been told that his approval was expected by the end of January. He informs me that the plan is that there will be 325 youth served at a Kidspace facility beginning as early as **THIS** summer. Now this is a little more speculative than page one - I haven't been asked to serve on any committee yet on this one. But the fact that the State Ed guy told me I should write to him asking to be apprised of the decisions coming forward in the next few weeks leads me to believe that this is about to become breaking news as well. Staffing at such a facility usually runs in the 3 to 1 ratio, so that too could mean up to a thousand jobs if their intended capacity is fully met anytime soon. These jobs, unlike the prison ones, would likely be non-union and non- civil service. And while many of them may go to people who already live in other communities nearby, the spill-over effects on the local economy are expected to be excellent.

On the third front - the sale of lakehousing land to a private developer - the news is not so complete. There is a potential buyer and a contract being worked out that would put the Ryan-style homes on FLAC drive on the tax rolls immediately, and allow further development of the lakefront land itself. Some talk is of marina and condominiums for summer rental on Seneca Lake! That's all very speculative, however, ( sorry) and much further off than 1999 proper.

Bottom line? As the next year unfolds, the dark cloud of depot downsizing may begin to dissipate and jobs may be returning to out community. With jobs come people buying goods, traveling through our town and neighboring ones, and even some people looking to relocate to rural America and its peaceful cadences, quiet spells and gorgeous lake views. Some of those people may even have kids that are looking for a really good little school to go to.

Expect to see construction workers starting this spring at local watering holes and sandwich shops, and expect to see a market for jobs of all sorts in Seneca County within the next few years. The last year of the last decade of the 20th century could be good for us.....

Let's hope so.

I will try to keep you posted on what I can tell you as fact - like the prison construction about to begin- and what is rumor -like the rest of this memo at this point. Thought you'd want to know.

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Also enclosed in this check is a handy booklet on calculating your optimum tax withholding. We will issue W-2's as soon as we have the software updates to do so, hopefully in time for your next paycheck. If you find any changes you wish to make in your withholding for 1999, please let Bonnie know.

Another employee-friendly gesture from your humanistic despot in the central office.

CM/CM

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