

## **Town of Amherst Supervisor Brian Kulpa January 2024 Message**

On New Year's Eve, it is tradition to celebrate the end of one year and welcome the next with friends and family. However, this past New Year's Eve our community saw, as we have seen many times before, our Town's emergency responders and critical support staff jump into action, giving up their holiday to help others.

At 5:30 p.m. the call went out that there was a fire at Hopkins Court Apartments. A huge debt of gratitude to Getzville Fire Company for its quick response and leadership to battle this large fire. I want to also thank all the mutual-aid fire departments, Clarence Center, East Amherst, Eggertsville, Ellicott Creek, Swormville and Williamsville, who worked together to contain the blaze. The Amherst Police Department worked in tandem with the fire departments to control the situation and once again provide critical services.

The Hopkins Court Apartments are an independent housing facility for seniors, which created its own unique challenges. The facility is a large two-story structure. Many of the residents have mobility issues and several require the use of a wheelchair. Despite the challenges faced, everyone was evacuated safely with only two minor injuries reported. It is my understanding that those patients who were transported to the hospital are recovering well and we wish them continued healing.

With everyone safely out of the building, the Town's Emergency Services & Safety Department immediately implement the Town's Emergency Shelter Plan for the dozens of displaced residents. Utilizing a University at Buffalo's Stampede bus, residents were quickly moved to the Amherst Senior Center. Many thanks to UB for its quick response to help.



The last time that the Town opened an emergency shelter was for the blizzard of 2022. A much different situation, but we took what we learned from that experience, and others prior, and knew what needed to be done. Supplies were in place and we had a team ready to go. I commend the staff of the Amherst Senior Center and the Amherst Facilities Department for staffing the shelter, and ensuring there was an open line of communication, connecting residents with family members, and providing a safe, warm space for all those who were displaced.

By 11:50 p.m., just before the start of 2024, the emergency shelter was closed. Many residents were able to return home thanks to the fire departments' quick action to contain the blaze. Hotels rooms were provided for residents who could not return home. The Town's outreach team continues to offer assistance and support as needed. We want to also thank Erie County EMS, the American Red Cross and NFTA for all providing critical support.

Just a few days later, our crews were tested again as they responded to a fatal fire on North Forest Road on Jan. 6. I thank all who responded and who continue to investigate and get answers for those impacted.

My fellow town board members and I are committed to supporting these vital services. We know how important it is to have well-manned volunteer fire companies with the proper equipment; to have a complete police force who can handle everything from rescues to traffic control during incidents such as this; and a well-trained team of Town staff members who are prepared to provide critical community services, 24/7.

The Town's response to the New Year's Eve emergency was excellent. As I met with staff at the Emergency Shelter, it was evident that the Town was well prepared for this situation and I applaud everyone who responded, giving up their holiday, to help. While not everyone made it home before midnight, in the end, everyone was able to go home to their families. And that is a job well done.