



Top Stories

Emergency declared in Peru as Mt. Ubinas threatens to erupt

The government of Peru has declared a state of emergency over threat of Mt. Ubinas erupting. The civil defence institute has recommended the total evacuation of the 3,500 residents of the district of Ubinas.

Study claims recreational ecstasy use and depression unrelated

A new study finds that there is no significant link between Ecstasy (MDMA) use and depression. Long-term effects are still unknown and heavily debated among scientists.

Featured story

Others named in lawsuit against Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal

A copy has been obtained of the lawsuit filed against the City of Buffalo for allegedly fast-tracking a seven million dollar hotel proposal. According to official court documents, there are more defendants than previously thought.

Wikipedia Current Events

•The Governor of Puerto Rico, Aníbal Acevedo Vilá, signs an executive order in which the government's budget will be exclusively used for health and security services. 43 agencies of the government will be shut down, while 15 will provide

Wikipedia Current Events

services partially. Another 60 will continue operating normally.

•University of California at San Diego psychology researcher Tim Gentner reportedly discovers that songbirds are capable of learning simple grammar, which may disprove Noam Chomsky's long believed hypothesis that humans are the only organism able to comprehend recursive grammar.

•Tony Snow is named White House Press Secretary.

•Ukraine marks the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power station explosion.

•Snyder Rini resigns as Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands immediately before facing a motion of no confidence in Parliament, prompting celebrations in the streets of Honiara.

•Egyptian police arrest 10 people in relation to the 2006 Dahab bombings, which has killed 24 people and injured more than 80 on 24 April.

•Peacekeeping Forces in Egypt were attacked outside the Nile Delta by two suicide bombers. No casualties.

Twin suicide bombings attack peacekeeping forces in Egypt

Just days after the bombings in the Egyptian resort town of Dahab, two more suicide bombers struck a Multinational Peacekeeping Forces base near the Gaza border. The attack occurred at around 1300

GMT. The number of casualties is not known at this time with the spokesperson for the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) and Egyptian security forces giving conflicting reports. According to Major Nathan Bond, an MFO spokesman, no peacekeepers were injured in the attack. However Egyptian security personnel maintain that one Norwegian, one New Zealander and four Egyptians were killed in the bombing.

Others named in lawsuit against Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal

Buffalo, New York – A copy has been obtained of the lawsuit filed against the City of Buffalo for allegedly fast-tracking a seven million dollar hotel proposal.

The Elmwood Village Hotel is a 72-room, seven-million-dollar hotel proposed by Savarino Construction Services Corporation and designed by architect Karl Frizlen of the Frizlen Group. Its construction would require the demolition of at least five buildings, currently at 1109-1121 Elmwood, which house several shops and residents. Although the properties are "under contract," it is still not known whether Savarino Construction actually owns the buildings. It is believed that Hans Mobius, a resident of Clarence, New York and former Buffalo mayoral candidate, is still the owner. The hotel is expected to be a franchise of the Wyndham Hotels group.

According to official court documents, there are more

defendants than previously thought. Documents state that not only Buffalo's Common Council and Planning Board are named in the lawsuit, but also the Mayor of Buffalo, Byron W. Brown, Savarino Construction Services Corporation, Hans J. Mobius and his son Hans S. Mobius owners of the properties at stake, Pano Georgiadis, owner of Pano's Restaurant on Elmwood, and Cendant Corporation, the parent company of Wyndham Hotels are also named in the suit.

According to the lawsuit, during the length of the trial, Savarino Construction along with their employees, Hans Mobius and his son are not allowed to make any alterations or "engage in the physical alteration" of any of the said properties, 1109-1121 Elmwood and 9999 Forest. The suit also states that the owner of 605 Forest, Pano Georgiadis is also to follow the same rule.

The suit also states that Hans Mobius, his son and employees or "agents" are not allowed to "take any step, lawful or otherwise, to terminate [the] petitioners, Nancy Pollina and Patricia Morris," owners of Don Apparel at 1119 Elmwood "tenancies." Although the business is owned by Pollina and Morris, they are without a lease.

Within the suit it states that the rezoning of the properties 1119-1121 Elmwood and 605 Forest, by the Common Council, from a 'R3' Dwelling District to a C2 commercial zone "constitutes as impermissible 'spot-zoning'" and is "not in accord with a well-considered plan for the development of the community and is null and void." According to the suit the courts of New York have defined spot-zoning as "the process of singling out a small parcel of land for a use

classification totally different from that of the surrounding area, for the benefit of the owner of such properties and to the detriment of other owners." The suit also states that the proposed site for the hotel is different from the surrounding properties because none of the zoning classifications, 'EB' [Elmwood Avenue Business District], 'R3' [Dwelling District], 'R1' [One Family District] and 'R2' [Dwelling District], permit the construction and operation of a hotel.

It is alleged that Savarino Construction "failed to utilize forms obtainable from the city clerk's office, failed to include an accurate map or survey showing the location of all buildings and structures and failed to include the names and addresses of each of the owners of the properties to be rezoned."

It is also believed that recommendation in regards to [hotel] compatibility, different land uses, traffic studies, community character, population density, relations between other residents and business owners, public convenience, governmental efficiency, and achieving and maintaining a satisfied community, were to be sent to Erie County's Planning agency and was to refer Savarino's rezoning application and site plan to the agency, however; the lawsuit alleges that although a referral was given to Savarino, it "does not appear that the 'full statement of such proposed action' was forwarded to the County [Agency]."

The suit also alleges that the Common Council "failed to wait the 'statutorily-mandated' 30-days after the County's Planning Agency's receipt" of recommendations from the

Council. The County's Planning Agency replied to the recommendations, however; the Agency replied on March 27, 2006, just six days after the Council made its recommendations, falling well short of the "statutorily-mandated" thirty days. The Agency's reply however, did not support or oppose the recommendations or hotel proposal.

Public hearings are required to be registered by the City clerk to the City Planning Board, and according to the suit, "no record" of the Public hearing on March 7, presenting the initial proposal to the public, was made within the City's Clerk office or Planning Board.

The suit also alleges that the Common Council and Planning Board also violated the State's Environmental Quality Review Act or SEQRA and the City's Environmental Review Ordinance or by allowing the Planning Board to be the "lead agency" instead of the Common Council. A lead agency is an involved agency principally responsible for undertaking or approving an action and therefore responsible for determining whether an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS is needed, according to the SEQRA regulations. The suit also states that the hotel proposal "constitutes an action under the SEQRA" because the project could "affect the environment by changing the use, appearance or condition of any natural resource or structure that requires one or more approvals from an agency or agencies" and that the Common Council and Planning Board are "obliged to comply with both the letter [recommendations] and spirit of the SEQRA review process" which include identifying the areas

of environmental concerns and taking a "hard look" at them. The suit also claims that the Common Council has the "sole authority to grant Savarino Construction's rezoning request" and "to approve the special development plan," but it also claims that the Planning Board is "an involved agency" but that it is "clearly subordinate to that of the Common Council" therefore the decision made by both the Council and Planning Board to allow the Planning Board to be the 'lead agency,' is in "violation" of the State's SEQRA and "renders all determinations" made by the Planning Board and Common Council on March 14, 21, and 28, 2006, "void and unauthorized." It goes on to say that the Council "proceeded without or in excess of their jurisdiction, and/or made a determination in violation of lawful procedure, affected by an error of law, and/or in an arbitrary and capricious manner." It also states that unless the requirements of the SEQRA are met, then the petitioners have the right to "seek a temporary restraining order" from the Court if circumstances require it.

The suit also states that a failure to grant a preliminary injunction, through the courts, will result in "irreparable injury" to the petitioners and that the Council and Planning Board have failed to comply with the requirements of the SEQRA and have violated several other state laws and city codes.

So far, Savarino Construction has not responded to any calls or e-mails. District councilman Joseph Golombek also has not responded. Georgiadis was unavailable for comment.

A preliminary hearing is scheduled

to take place at 9:30 a.m. on June 8, 2006 in the Supreme Court building at 50 Delaware Avenue in Buffalo, on the 8th floor, part 31.

Study claims recreational ecstasy use and depression unrelated

A new study published in the May 2006 issue of the Journal of Psychopharmacology and conducted at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette finds that no significant link between Ecstasy (MDMA) use and depression.

Ecstasy: common street drug

A common street drug Ecstasy is found mostly in tablet form, and often taken in a nightclub setting. Its psychological effects include making users affectionate, giving them the impression of heightened senses in response to music, and overall euphoria. Physically the drug acts as a stimulant, a mild diuretic and causes hypothermia, which is why, in combination with physical exertion leading to perspiration, users often drink large amounts of water to prevent dehydration.

Serotonin is an important neurotransmitter, also known as 5-HT or 5-hydroxytryptophan, implicated in controlling mood. In fact, most well known anti-depressants such as Paxil, or Prozac are believed to work by stabilizing the level of serotonin in the brain (SSRIs.) Ecstasy is believed to increase the levels of serotonin, because of its effects on mood. Research in lab animals has provided evidence that it causes long-term post use serotonin depletion. A common hypothesis among many researchers is that the reduction in serotonin levels below normal could be detected by a corresponding decline in mood.

Sixty-four participants took part in the study. One half of the participants between the age of 18 to 45 were obtained by word of mouth or over the Internet. The other half consisted of controls that had no experience taking ecstasy, recruited from introductory psychology classes at the university.

According to the study, participants filled out a questionnaire about their personal and drug use history. The personal history questionnaire queried the gender, age, psychiatric background, and current anti-depressant drug usage, whereas the drug history questionnaire explored the lifetime usage and usage habits of a wide variety of substances, including specific questions about abstinence from ecstasy and the most ecstasy taken in 12 hours.

Two tests were performed to assess psychiatric function: the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) and the Shipley Institute of Living Scale (SILS).

The BDI-II is a 21-question self-assessment that according to many sources is empirically valid for highlighting the presence and severity of depressive symptoms, and meets the requirements of the DSM-IV, which is the standard reference that mental health professionals use to diagnose psychological disorders.

The SILS is administered to assess cognitive abilities. It was developed in 1940 as a measure of general intellectual functioning, and is still administered in its original form.

According to the study there was no significant difference in the BDI-II scores between the control

and experimental groups. Furthermore no significant correlation was found between any conditions of ecstasy use.

This study seems to go against the consensus that MDMA reduces serotonin levels and causes some measurable damage. However there are other studies in the same journal that go into more detail about individual usage habits and harm reduction strategies that need to be considered alongside the data presented with this study. The study claims that when experimental groups are gathered via the Internet, they could be biased (more available information, taking less) and adopt different harm reduction strategies than average users.

However, according to Professor David Nutt at University of Bristol, one could conclude Ecstasy causes less harm, and has less societal costs than alcohol.

Alabama postal workers and customers become ill, suspicious substance found

Six workers in the post office in Hueytown, Alabama developed breathing problems and 23 were sent to the hospital after a chemical used in the manufacture of fishing lures leaked from a package.

The post office, located five miles west of downtown Birmingham, Alabama, was evacuated, and Hueytown firefighters in hazardous materials attire inspected the chemical. The chemical was found to have leaked from an inadequately designed package, evaporated quickly leaving a garlicky scent, and discolored the flooring tile in the post office. Workers complained of symptoms ranging from breathing difficulties

to vomiting to burning in the throat.

The chemical was later identified as "J.J.'s Magic," a yellow dye for soft plastic fishing lures which contains garlic oil as a fish attractant. The manufacturer confirmed that a two-ounce bottle of the product was sent to a customer in suburban Birmingham and speculated that the container may have cracked in transit.

Today in History

1521 - Filipino natives led by Lapu-Lapu killed Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in the Battle of Mactan.

1565 - Conquistador Miguel López de Legazpi and 500 armed soldiers arrived at Cebu and established the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines.

1667 - John Milton, blind and impoverished, sold the copyright of *Paradise Lost* for £10.

1865 - An explosion destroyed the steamboat *Sultana* on the Mississippi River, killing 1,700 passengers.

1994 - Apartheid in South Africa: The African National Congress had a landslide victory in the first non-racial elections in the history of South Africa.

April 27 is Independence Day in Togo (1960) and Sierra Leone (1961), Freedom Day in South Africa.

Quote of the Day

"The winds and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators." ~ Edward Gibbon

Word of the Day

impugn; *v*

Definition

1. To verbally assault.
2. To claim to be false or to cause to be questioned.

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