

THE DAILY GAZETTE | Wednesday, May 20, 2020

NEWS



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Officials urge social distancing, boater safety on Great Sacandaga Lake

"We just want people to use common sense," on lake this summer

Adam Shinder [@Adam_Shinder](#) | [May 19, 2020](#)



Fulton County Sheriff Richard Giardino speaks Tuesday during a news conference about boater safety.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ERICA MILLER

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MAYFIELD — Officials from multiple law enforcement agencies urged boaters to maintain social distancing and use safe practices on the water as the Great Sacandaga Lake Safe Lake Initiative held a news conference Tuesday morning as part of Boater Safety Week.



MENU



the New York State Police, the State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Hudson River-Black River Regulating District, the Great Sacandaga Lake Association, the Sean Craig Memorial Fund, the Henry D. Ross III Memorial Fund, local governments from municipalities around the lake and various private entities held the annual news conference to remind boaters to be safe when they get out on the lake.

This year, safety has an expanded meaning, as while Fulton County Sheriff Richard Giardino acknowledged that many locals are itching to enjoy themselves on the lake after being under restrictive “stay-at-home” orders to curb the spread of COVID-19, people still need to maintain proper social-distancing practices as they head to the lake for Memorial Day weekend and throughout the summer months.

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“We just want people to use common sense,” Giardino said. “I know everyone’s been pent-up. They’re all going to want to tie their boats up, they’re all going to want to celebrate the freedom of getting out. But, do it wisely. The most important thing is that the precautions aren’t for most people, the precautions are for the elderly and those with immune deficiencies. When you’re wearing a mask, it’s not protecting you, it’s protecting somebody else because you could be an asymptomatic carrier.”

Though Giardino said the public can expect a “heavy police presence” on and around the lake this summer, it’s purpose will be to make sure the public is properly educated about the social distancing and cleaning procedures that should be observed on the lake.

“We’re not a facemask enforcement bureau,” Giardino said. “We’re here to ask people, ‘Look, it’s not for you, it’s for the person you love at home or for somebody else when you wear a facemask or use disinfectant.’ Our message is a little more of education. We’re not the facemask police.”

Giardino also acknowledged that the COVID-19 shutdown disrupted classes for and distribution of boater safety certificates, which are required this year for all motor boat operators born on or after Jan. 1, 1993 under Brianna’s Law.

While Giardino said officers would give “a little leeway” considering the circumstances, he urged all boat operators — even if they’ve yet to receive a certificate — to use proper precautions.

“It’s really based on officer discretion,” he said. “It’s understandable that if somebody gives any of our agencies a hard time, it’s more likely to go from educating them to giving them a summons. We’re asking for the public’s compliance.”


The initiative distributed a series of tips from the National Safe Boating Council navigating for social distancing while boating. Among the tips included staying in your local community, limiting people aboard a boat to those in your immediate household, frequent hand washing and sanitizing, avoiding pulling up to other boaters or close to others on a beach and not going boating if someone in your household is sick.



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DEC Lt. Matt Clemens urged boaters to maintain social distancing at boat launches and marinas, and also cautioned against boaters tying up their vessels on the lake.

"That creates a situation where you have a lot of vessels congregated together," Clemens said, "and we're trying to keep our social distancing in effect throughout the summer and make sure everyone has a safe and enjoyable summer."

Beyond the procedures brought on by COVID-19, officials also stressed a message of safety and common sense. Boaters were urged to wear life jackets, take safety precautions, avoid high speeds and not consume alcohol while operating a boat.

State Police Capt. Kevin Buchal reminded the public that, according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics, the No. 1 cause of boating accidents is boater inattention, and the No. 1 cause of fatalities is alcohol involvement.

"I encourage everyone who uses the lake this summer to keep those factors in mind," Buchal said, "and plan accordingly."

"Use common sense. Enjoy your summer," Saratoga County Sheriff Michael Zurlo said. "Unfortunately, we're under different circumstances here this summer, but be safe out there."

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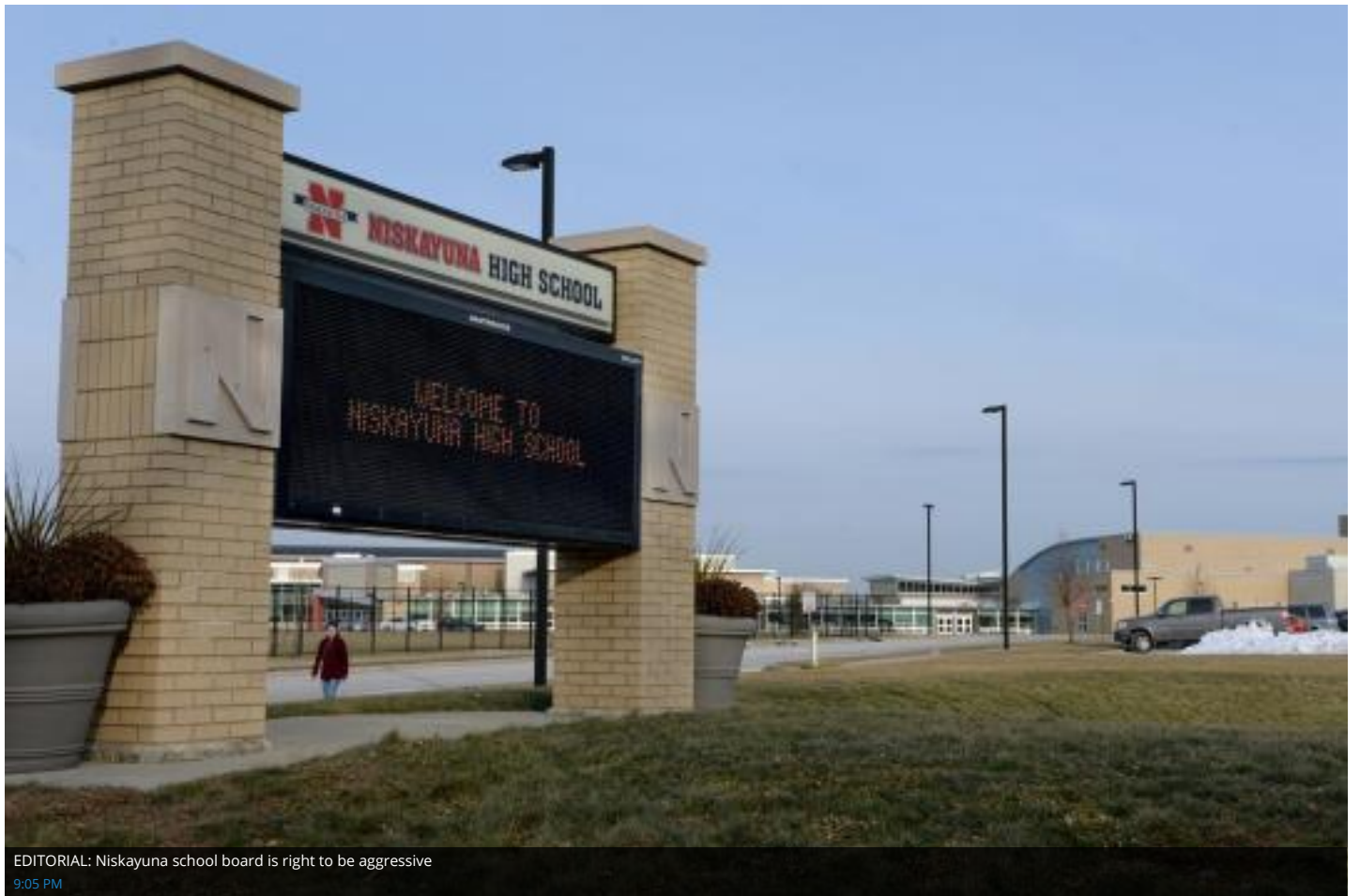


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Seven candidates seek two open seats on Ballston Spa school board

Staff Report [@zacharydmatson](#) | May 18, 2020





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BALLSTON SPA -- Seven candidates are competing to fill two open Ballston Spa school board seats in the June 9 school board election.

Current vice president Lillian McCarthy is running for re-election. Candidates Susan Filburn, Matthew Dreher, Rebekah Deuel-Jones, Susan Moore, David Newell and Katie Whittemore also will be on the ballot.

Voters will also decide on two ballot propositions: The first will be whether to approve \$968,000 in school bus replacements, and the second will be approving \$58,795 to be collected for the Ballston Spa Public Library.

The June 9 election will take place by absentee ballots only; voters must return their ballots to the district by June 9 at 5 p.m. The two candidates receiving the most votes will be elected to serve three-year terms on the school board beginning July 1. The candidates will be listed on the ballot alphabetically by last name.

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