



Lyon will be sidelined for ‘a bit of time’

Ruff says Sabres goalie being evaluated for a lower-body injury | PAGE C1

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TOP STORIES TO WATCH IN 2026

A NEW MAYOR, NEW STADIUM AND MORE NUCLEAR CAPACITY

Year ahead will bring changes, questions for Buffalo Niagara



HARRY SCULL JR., BUFFALO NEWS

The Buffalo Bills will start their 2026-27 season in the new, \$2.2 billion Highmark Stadium in Orchard Park, just across Abbott Road from the current facility.



LIBBY MARCH, BUFFALO NEWS

Gov. Kathy Hochul announces a nuclear power cooperation agreement between New York State and Ontario at the Buffalo AKG Art Museum on Dec. 19.

NEWS STAFF REPORTS

As any gambler knows, it's impossible to predict the future. But in Western New York in 2026, there are some bets worth making. The Buffalo Bills will play in a new home stadium for the first time since 1973. The city of Buffalo will have a new elected mayor for the first time in decades. And the nation's eyes will turn to New York in November to see if the first woman elected governor can manage another first: the first woman elected governor to win re-election. As the calendar turns, Buffalo News reporters look forward and make educated guesses about what else awaits us in the new year.

The new home of the Bills

The Buffalo Bills will make the final push this year to get their new stadium done. Construction crews are working day and night at the construction site to make sure it is ready for the 2026 season. The stadium is slated to be substantially completed by July. About 1,500 workers are on the job, representing a plethora of trades. Just about every component of the stadium is being worked on – from the mechanical, electrical and plumbing work getting done to seats being installed, video screens and sound systems being tested to finishings, drywall and carpeting going in.

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Kulpa has ‘no regrets’ as Amherst tenure ends

Supervisor stepping down after 8 years on the job

BY STEPHEN T. WATSON News Staff Reporter

Frank Sinatra had a few regrets. Brian Kulpa doesn't have any. "I don't live with regrets. I don't harbor regrets," Kulpa said in an interview in December at the Amherst Municipal Building. "I have no regrets." The Amherst supervisor has always preferred to look forward, but now when he does, he sees his tenure leading the town's government coming to an end. The Democrat entered the job eight years ago with a bold agenda for upstate New York's most populous town, promising decisions driven by data and "smart growth" principles. Kulpa can point to new housing, a burgeoning medical corridor, growth in the Niagara Falls Boulevard retail corridor and the pending revival of the former Westwood Country Club as a county park. But his Amherst Central Park concept was never fully realized. The Boulevard Mall and Northtown Plaza projects, two redevelopment efforts he inherited as supervisor, have lagged. And an 11.4% property tax levy increase approved in 2023 sparked a backlash that lingers today. "I think he had a vision, and it really did not come to fruition like he thought it was going to," said Andrea Morgante, a member of the Amherst Concerned Citizens group that formed following the tax hike. Term limits barred Kulpa, 47, from seeking a third term. So, on Thursday, he returns to full-time work as an architect and urban planner and prepares to take on a new role as a lobbyist.

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ANALYSIS

War also is waged for Trump's way of thinking

BY CONSTANT MÉHEUT New York Times

KYIV, Ukraine — As President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine traveled back from Florida on Monday, he could breathe a sigh of relief. His meeting with President Trump to discuss a peace plan seemed to have passed without drama — Trump had neither berated him nor echoed Kremlin talking points, at least publicly. By the standards of past encounters, that counted as progress. But while Zelenskyy was en route home, President Vladimir Putin was on the phone with Trump, introducing a new twist. Putin claimed that a Ukrainian drone attack had targeted one of his residences in Russia overnight. "I don't like it," Trump later told reporters, as he recounted the call. "It's not the right time to do any of that. I was very angry about it." The accusation was just the sort that could derail Ukraine's diplomatic effort. Zelenskyy swiftly denied it, describing the claim on social media as "a complete fabrication" designed "to undermine all achievements of our shared diplomatic efforts with President Trump's team." Ukrainian negotiators discussed the claim with U.S. counterparts, Zelenskyy added, and his foreign minister also weighed in.

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Mamdani faces looming challenges

BY NICHOLAS FANDOS New York Times

NEW YORK — Around this time last year, Zohran Mamdani was a little-known mayoral candidate so desperate to raise his profile that he spent New Year's Day plunging into the icy waters at Coney Island, hoping to use the social media stunt to promote his rent-freeze pledge. Now, as the calendar turns again, there is no doubt that he has New York's attention. Up to 40,000 people are expected to crowd City Hall today to watch his swearing in as New York's next mayor, the largest inaugural crowd in decades. The improbable rise has been etched into the city's history books. With a disarming smile and targeted platform, the 34-year-old Democrat mobilized young transplants, middle-aged bodega owners and many others around an ambitious affordability platform and toppled a Democratic dynasty. Almost overnight, his victory made him an international phenomenon, as beloved by fellow South Asians in Bangladesh as in Brooklyn, and as polarizing to Jews in Tel Aviv, Israel, as in Manhattan. Today, after a two-month transition sprint, he officially becomes the

first Muslim and South Asian to govern America's largest city, its youngest mayor in more than a century and the first democratic socialist to lead the hub of global capitalism in decades. Yet for all the milestones and the only-in-New York boosterism that is certain to accompany the oath of office, what comes next will determine whether Mamdani will be viewed as the catalyst for a new era or as a failed idealist, soon forgotten. His mandate is unusually clear. More than 1.1 million New Yorkers voted based largely on his promises to tame a growing affordability crisis that has made one of the world's most expensive cities nearly unlivable for many working people. No mayor since the 1960s has won more votes. Still, nearly 1 million New Yorkers voted against him, and rarely has a mayor taken office promising to deliver so much with so few assurances of needed cooperation. Mamdani, once an Assembly member from Queens, will be reliant on Gov. Kathy Hochul, a moderate from Buffalo, and the state Legislature to generate the billions of dollars in new revenue needed to fund free buses, universal

government-funded child care and other promises — all when Washington is slashing funding to the city and state. And as some of his predecessors have found, New York City with its 8 million unruly people can sometimes seem almost ungovernable. "Until you are in one of those jobs, you don't understand the enormity of the day-to-day needs, and the complexity of the system," said Steven M. Cohen, a longtime ally of and former state official under former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Mamdani's chief election rival. The opposition will be real. Small landlords are worried that Mamdani's proposed rent freeze on rent-stabilized units could bankrupt them. Political moderates see a city hurtling toward the extremes. Many Jewish New Yorkers (though not all) view Mamdani's stark critiques of Israel as a threat to their safety. Gerard Kassar, who leads New York's Conservative Party, said he feared that Mamdani would make his hometown "an American test tube for tried and failed international socialist policies." National standard-bearers of the left,

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