

Keeping Our Trails Safe and Enjoyable for All

The Town of Clarence has long been a leader in promoting healthy, outdoor recreation. In fact, we were one of the first towns in the region to develop a dedicated Rails to Trails bike path network. This system spans over 11 miles and provides residents with a safe, scenic route to walk, run, or bike—without the danger of vehicular traffic. These trails have become a cherished asset in our community, offering a peaceful and accessible space for all ages to enjoy nature and stay active.

However, as technology evolves, so too must our local policies. Over the past few years, the popularity of electric-powered bicycles (e-bikes) and other motorized recreational vehicles has grown rapidly. While many residents use these bikes responsibly, unfortunately, we have seen an uptick in misuse—particularly among some younger users.

One recent incident underscored the seriousness of the issue: a young rider on an electric dirt bike was clocked by radar at 53 MPH on the bike path. For reference, the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have jointly recommended a 15 MPH speed limit on public trails. This wasn't an isolated occurrence. Multiple reports have emerged of groups riding electric or gas-powered bikes side by side—sometimes taking up the entire width of the trail—forcing pedestrians and cyclists off the path. Even more troubling, there have been reports of verbal altercations and hostile behavior in response to concerns raised by trail users.

It's important to note that the original ordinances guiding trail use in Clarence were written before this surge in high-powered recreational bikes. With this in mind, the Town Board has taken action. We are moving forward with amending Section 143-1 of our Town Code to explicitly address the use of e-bikes and gas-powered motorcycles on our trail system. This updated legislation will grant enforcement authority to both the New York State Police and the Erie County Sheriff's Office, including the ability to impound vehicles that are illegally operated on our trails.

Under New York State Law, any e-bike operated on public systems—including our trails—must have pedals and riders must wear helmets. These are not just guidelines; they are enforceable safety standards designed to protect everyone.

Our top priority is—and always will be—public safety. The trails are meant to be inclusive and welcoming, not places where walkers or cyclists feel intimidated or endangered. These updates will help ensure that all residents can continue to enjoy our trail system in peace.

On another note, I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the Clarence Fireworks in the Park Committee for another outstanding celebration this year. Councilman Bob Alteri brought over 30 years of experience to the table in organizing this event, which is not only a fun and safe gathering for our residents but also a mini fundraiser for several local nonprofit organizations. Every detail is thoughtfully planned—from the vendor selection to the decision to hold the event the Monday before July 4th, ensuring minimal conflict with other weekend commitments like graduations, vacations, or other fireworks events.

As our community continues to grow and adapt, we remain committed to balancing progress with safety. Thank you to everyone who helps make Clarence a safe, active, and vibrant place to live. Whether you're enjoying our trails, attending local events, or simply taking pride in your neighborhood, your engagement matters. Let's continue working together to preserve what makes Clarence special - while ensuring it's safe and enjoyable for generations to come.