



Commentator, v.I, i.1

In this issue:

- Calendar
- Observer Corps Reports
- Health Committee report
- Blue Ribbon Panel reports
- Charter Transition team Report
- Charter Transition legislative meeting
- Charter transition local meetings
- Prez sez
- Yard sale
- Directors' List
- Membership News

Commentator v.1,i.1
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C o m m e n t a t o r

J u n e , 2 0 0 8

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region public policy through education and advocacy. The League does not support or oppose candidates for public office but does encourage its members as individuals to participate actively in the political process. The League acts on those issues the membership chooses for study and action

The LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region covers the Mid-Ulster County area and the Dutchess County area. We belong to the LWV of New York State and the LWV of the US.

CALENDAR		
JUNE		
3	7:15-9:15	Board Meeting at Jacki's
8	1:00-4:00	Susan B. Anthony Honoree Luncheon Wiltwyck Country Club
24	4:00-7:00	Board Planning Meeting At Jacki's
JULY		
8	TBA	Meeting with YWCA-call Jean for details
9	7:15-9:15	Board Meeting at Jacki's
AUGUST		
5	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Jacki's, tentative
23-24	9:00-3:30	Yard sale at Emilie Hauser's
SEPTEMBER		
9	7:15-9:15	Board Meeting at Jacki's
19	TBA	YWCA Dinner honoring LWV as "Organization of the Year"
23		Informational meeting on Charter Transition in Saugerties

Observer Corps Reports

The following Observer Corps reports were submitted by Lee Cane, who has been attending the meetings of these groups. They were not included in previous Commentators owing to lack of space.

UC Health Committee Meeting 3/25/08

The committee was convened by its chairman, Robert Parete. Ed Brown, Deputy Director of the Ulster County Department of Mental Health, representing Mental Health in Marshall Beckman's absence, addressed the various concerns involved in the ongoing problem with recruiting qualified persons to fill existing vacancies and the projected renovation of the Mental Health building at Golden Hill, which included the computer upgrade as well.

Blue Ribbon Panel on Long-Term Care 3/24/08

The committee was convened at 6:30.

Steve Kelley advised that since the last meeting in February, progress had been made in some areas.

- * Review of the engineers' and architects' reports, questionable about renovation; bed need based on state/county information from Sheree Cross is a full capacity as the fastest growing segment of the population is the over-85 group. While more beds may be needed rather than fewer, the use of services through the continuum of care may result in not needing as many. The age of facilities in UC show some old, some new, which may eventually need replacement as a facility has a certain life cycle.
- * Mr. Parete is still working on what use the facility could be put to if it was no longer used. More definite information will be available for the next meeting.
- * Mr. Kelley and Mr. Parete met with Chairman Donaldson, brought him up to date on the work of the panel and requested a resource person to help write the paper which will cover the work of the panel and its recommendations.
- * Mr. Marmo and Mr. Parete reported on the continuum of care piece. They commented that UC does not have a lot of assisted living offerings. Although such offerings would involve lower costs, there are not enough beds in UC. NYS policy is to transition people from nursing homes to assisted living centers, but there is a question whether Governor Patterson will continue to support such.

Mrs. Cross commented that while there may appear to be a need for more nursing beds the state has no strategic plan to see that it happens. It was noted in discussion that growth in continuum of care services would blunt the growth in need of nursing beds and that it was not necessarily the county which should be responsible for more beds.

Statistical material was handed out which showed 1220 beds among the 6 existing nursing homes in UC at about 97% capacity overall. Eventually some aged beds must be replaced. The projection was that in a span of years from

And the 4/14/08 meeting

2006-2030, the Golden Hill Healthcare facility would need about 387 beds given the growth of the 75-85+ age range.

The panel still needs to obtain and review comprehensive reimbursement information.

This meeting was convened at 5:10 PM by Steven Kelley, chairman. Dunefsky, Kelley, Marmo and Roberts were present and Parete arrived soon after. Richard Mathews attended the last hour of the meeting.

Kelley distributed an initial preliminary draft copy of how the panel's report to the Ulster County Legislature may be put together.

Certain points were stressed throughout the meeting:

- (1) the primary function of the panel is to present a report with recommendations pertaining to the Golden Hill Health Care Center's continued operation to the Ulster County Legislature;
- (2) it will be up to the legislature to decide what to do with the panel's recommendations.

The major part of the meeting dealt with various aspects of the draft report as to where several of the topics should appear. There was discussion on what material should appear in the report as well as how such information should be presented.

- * It was suggested that handling of any union matters was outside the scope of the panel's directive from the county and any questions dealing with such should be handled by the county legislature.
- * There was discussion on the need to include possible uses of the building in the panel's report if the center is closed: relocate other county offices to the building, sell the building, rent out space, etc.

Mr. Mathews came to the meeting to familiarize himself with the topic, as he will be acting as moderator for the April 26 public meeting sponsored by the LWV on the future of Golden Hill, at which Mr. Kelley and Mr. Parete will be panelists. He asked questions about renovation, possible closing, public/private considerations, when the final report would be delivered to the legislature, and how it would be handled. Mr. Parete said it would appear on the Health Committee agenda and would be reviewed by the legislature during the summer.

Mr. Mathews noted that this was a county matter and the towns in Ulster County need to be involved, need to understand about access to care and how it can be delivered, need to know the changes occurring as a result of state and federal government positions, and need to buy into the idea.

The apparent fact that home-based health care personnel is not generally readily available throughout the county was noted and the implications of this were discussed.

Charter Transition Team Meeting

The Charter Transition Team met on March 25th; Gary Bischoff presided.

Initially the time line for completion of the administrative code was reviewed. The second information meeting will be held on April 2nd, picking up where the February meeting left off. The goal is to complete the Administrative Code by June, according to Bea Havranek, First Assistant County Attorney. His would allow the legislators June and July to digest it, and in August the legislature would vote on the entire Administrative Code.

The next item on the agenda was the tentative budget schedule. Other than the observation that there would be a second meeting in December 2008 to deal with certain civil service matters, no changes were offered. Mrs. Collins did question whether the team meeting once a month at 4:30 would provide enough time to accomplish what the team wanted to get done. Mrs. Havranek thought it adequate for now depending on what happens in June; Mr. Bischoff wanted to hold off any change of meeting time for now.

Review of the next portion of the administrative code resulted in the following: the Legislature Chair would be allowed to appoint the vice-chair, but the group acknowledged that the full legislature would make the final determination. The Commissioner of Social Services must deposit and dollars paid to the Department of Social Services once a week. Since the medical examiner is appointed under statute, the individual must be a resident of Ulster County.

Mr. Bischoff advised the team that he hopes to have the sub-committee's recommendation on financial organization in April.

Discussion on salary for County Executive and County Comptroller followed. The team can only make recommendations, as the salaries must go top the full legislature as part of the 2009 budget. Mr. Bischoff suggested that the comptroller salary should be 85% of the county executive salary. Dr. Benjamin suggested that rather than emphasizing the county executive's salary alone, the savings to be gained from having the entire office of the county executive should be evaluated.

The observer was unable to attend the rest of the meeting and so cannot report on it.

Special Session of the Legislature on Transition

On April 2nd the Ulster County Legislature met in special session. Once the business of the legislature had been addressed, Gary Bischoff, chairman of the transition team opened the second informational meeting for review of the administrative code. Bea Havranek from the county attorney's office reviewed what the committee she chairs has done in order to produce the administrative code in a timely manner so that come August the entire legislature will be able to vote on it.

Some of the points Mrs. Havranek made were:

- * the administrative code when adopted will be a local law;
- * it is a clarification of the charter;
- * the material in black cannot be changed, that is the charter;
- * annual reports will be required from all department heads by March 1 and submitted to the county executive and the county legislature.

Mrs. Havranek commented that the charter should be followed for a year or so to see how it works; then if any change is sought it can be done by a permissive or mandatory referendum.

Following her commentary, Mr. Bischoff reviewed the time line which indicates when changes need to be achieved or voted on. He explained that everything must be in place for the budget that will be dealt with later in the year. When comments from the audience were raised regarding salaries, he indicated that this was being discussed in committee and that no decision had been reached.

A comment from a legislator expressed concern over the amount of "power" the county executive would have; it would take a two-thirds vote of the legislature to override a decision of the county executive. In response to that, there were comments from other legislators that there was definite opportunity for the legislature to work cooperatively to get matters taken care of, including this type of vote.

The third and last informational ,meeting will be in June

Public Meetings on the Charter

A number of informational meetings about the charter will be held in various towns throughout the county later this year. There will be charter events on September 23, September 24, October 2, October 7, and October 14. Times and places will be announced later.

A candidates' event is planned for October 20th at the BOCES facility in New Paltz, and another is tentatively scheduled for October 25.

More information will be available later; this is an early announcement to help keep calendars free.

Publicize the Charter

It is not clear how much knowledge or interest the public has in the charter. As a League, we should be promoting awareness and understanding of the charter. Clearly the public meetings will educate the public, but perhaps we should be writing letters to newspapers and "talking the charter up" in other groups.

Prez Sez

Greetings,

We had our first board meeting of the new fiscal year last evening. I think I have said it before but it is worth repeating. League board meetings rejuvenate me. At the end of two hours, I again realize why I have agreed to be president of this great organization. One thing particularly provoked lively discussion and perhaps a little jaw dropping. That was the Observer Corps report. It seems that one of our Observer Corps volunteers attended a meeting and was chastised when a public official learned that this individual's notes of the meeting would be published in the Commentator.

What would Thomas Jefferson say? A lot! "When the Press is free and every man able to read, all is safe." Here's another one. "Educate and inform the whole mass of the people.... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty." And this is what the League of Women Voters will proudly continue to do, keeping our citizens informed to the very best of our ability. As T. J. said again, "When the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government." No doubt, were he still with us, I am certain Thomas Jefferson would be cheering us on for we embody his spirit and those beliefs that he so eloquently stated.

Jean

**Yard Sale
August 23-24**

Thanks to Emilie Hauser, we will have a yard sale again this year. It will be on a smaller scale than the ones we used to have at Elizabeth Askue's, which were wonderful but exhausting. Emilie holds hers in her garage and yard, and has space for a goodly amount of merchandise. You will be able to bring things to her place starting August 14th.

Volunteers will be needed to do pricing on the 21st and 22nd, and to work at the sale on the 23rd or 24th. Volunteers will also be needed to do cleanup after the sale. If you have something very large or heavy, call Lee Ridgway at 339-4927 and she will make some arrangement for pickup. If you can volunteer, call Emilie Hauser at 339-4820 to arrange your service time.

The yard sale has always been a good fund-raiser and get-together for members, and should not be so taxing in its smaller scope and venue. If anyone would like to make cookies or other goodies to sell at the sale, we might add to our proceeds. The best things are finger food that people can munch on while they are browsing; they are inexpensive to buy and attractive as impulse buys. Now if anyone knows a Good Humor vendor who would like to hang out at the sale, that would be an added attraction if the weather is as hot as it often is for the yard sale! So bring your unwanted items, and plan to buy the treasures that others have brought!

Addresses and directions will appear in next month's Commentator.

Officers

President, Jean McGarry
 V-P, Jacki Moriarty
 Sec'y, Emilie Hauser
 Treas. Dale Thompson

Directors

Cindy Bell
 Betty Chin
 Chris Henning
 Irene McGinnis
 Lee Ridgway
 Renee Sachs
 Margaret Sellers
 Esther Stickley

Membership News and Notices

At the Annual Meeting, Officers and Directors were elected in accordance with the list on the left. The budget was passed. Three local studies were adopted and members will be needed to head them up and participate. These local studies are:

1. "Should the County replace, renovate and maintain a nursing home facility?" (continuing study). The committee feels they need more time to work. An extension of one year was granted for the Healthcare Facility study.
2. "How safe is your drinking water?" While it was agreed that this is a topic of current interest, not all were in agreement of its relevance or appropriateness as a League study. Nevertheless it was adopted.
3. "What steps are necessary for Ulster and Dutchess Counties to reduce their carbon footprint?" The proposal was adopted.

Don't forget the Susan B. Anthony's Honorees' Luncheon!

I/we wish to become members of the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2009	
Name:	Currently Member(s)?:
Address:	
Telephone: (day)	(eve)
Email:	
I/We enclose:	Household Membership (\$75)
Individual Membership (\$50)	
Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (<i>tax deductible</i> ;) for our use (Please send a separate check which MUST be payable to NYSLWV Ed Fund)	
	\$
If you are upgrading to a Household Membership, please include the name and email address of new members	
Check here if you prefer NOT to be contacted about local LWV meetings ?	
Will receive <i>Commentator</i> online _____ or will read it on website _____ or Please mail <i>Commentator</i> _____	
(Update the above form and return it to us with your check at PO Box 3564, Kingston, New York 12402)	

League of Women Voters
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