



Commentator, v.I, i.2

In this issue:

- Calendar
- Charter Transition
 - Committee Report
- Charter Transition
 - Team Report
- Health Committee report
- Human Development
 - Committee Report
- Ways and Means Report
- League Luncheon
- Prez sez
- Yard sale

Commentator v.1,i.2
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COMMENTATOR JULY/AUGUST, 2008

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 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		
AUGUST		
5	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Jacki's
14 and 15	6:00-8:00	Drop off goods for yard sale at Emilie Hauser's
16	8:00-noon	Drop off yard sale goods
18	9:00-noon 6:00-8:00	Sorting,pricing and drop off Drop off
19	9:00-noon	Sorting, pricing and drop-off
20	9:00-noon 6:00-8:00	Sorting,pricing and drop off Drop off
21-22	9:00-noon	Sorting, pricing and drop-off
23-24	9:00-3:00	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

Charter Transition Committee 7/2/08

The meeting was opened by Wayne Harris at about 6:45 on July 2, 2008. This was the third and final informational meeting offered by the committee to the members of the Ulster County Legislature. There were 22 legislators present.

Deputy County Attorney Bea Havranek conducted the session, at which the last third of the Ulster County Administrative Code was reviewed. Mrs. Havranek noted that the Charter itself cannot be changed. She then clarified some matters that had previously raised questions:

Should a vacancy in the office of the DA, Sheriff, County Clerk or Treasurer occur, other than by expiration of term of office, the governor will fill that vacancy.

If the Clerk of the County Legislature does not call for an organizational meeting of the county legislature when there is a vacancy in that office, or if the Clerk of the Legislature is unable to or fails to make that call, then the County Clerk will issue the notice for such a meeting. The Transition Committee added a procedure to be used.

No current or former county legislator may be appointed to a paid office or paid position of employment with UC for one year after his/her service as a County Legislator has ended with one exception: the position of Commissioner of Elections.

Mrs. Havranek listed some general procedures that also needed to be followed (some of which are already in the current law):

- Anyone who is appointed to a position with UC must follow certain rules, meet certain qualifications, and be on a civil service list.
- Anyone working for UC who handles money must live in UC and must be bonded, including the County Executive.
- Members of Boards must be residents of Ulster County.
- Boards must make reports.
- The expression "within appropriation provided" is used to enable people to be hired and to enable administrators to do their work.
- The VA Director must be a veteran who served on active duty in the armed forces during a wartime period.

At the end of the Administrative Code is a list of Local Laws which are in conflict with the Charter and these will be repealed.

Mrs. Havranek thanked all the members of her committee who have met weekly for months and without whom, she said, the work involved would not have been completed.

Charter Transition Team 7/22/08

The meeting was called to order at 4:47 on July 22 by chairman Gary Bischoff. Members of the team, personnel from the Administrator's office and Kathy Mihm, Clerk of the County Legislature were present.

Mrs. Mihm told the committee the process for preparing the Administrative Code for presentation to the

County Legislature. In August the Administrative Code will be sent to General Code to be reviewed for any inconsistencies within the document itself or with the Charter and local laws. The county will receive an electronic version of the results to review. An updated version of the Code will be given to the county in preparation for the Public Hearing on October 1. The County Legislature's vote on the Administrative Code will take place on October 8.

The cost for this procedure has been budgeted at \$4,200. Legislator Bischoff asked to have the work done sooner, but Mrs. Mihm said that General Code has its own production schedule which must be accepted.

Legislator Decker reported on the 7/14/08 Charter Team meeting where they reviewed some changes that had been made and "cleaned up" the language. The phrase "within the limits of appropriations" now appears in some sections of the Code. A motion to include it throughout the document, as long as it does no harm, was passed.

After discussion on requiring that all department heads be Ulster County residents, it was agreed that it was not unreasonable to require all elected officials to be UC residents and to require that non-resident department heads move to Ulster County within a reasonable length of time. It was also agreed that there should be flexibility to hire "good people" who might live outside Ulster County. No motion.

Legislator Roberti had suggested changes to the Rules. It was agreed that Legislators will continue to be able to bring matters directly from the floor to the Legislature, as well as through committee.

There is a financial impact on the county budget of adding more staff to both the Executive's office and the Comptroller's. There are three positions and about \$300,000 involved. Considerable discussion followed. The team agreed that the Charter form of government was supposed to show efficiencies in county operations and voiced concerns about rising costs and the overall poor economy; however, team members agreed that the county must also accept the reality that costs are rising. A motion was made that the increased staffing costs in the county budget as a result of the Charter be budget neutral in the amended budget for 2008 and that the costs associated with these new positions be as reasonable as possible. The motion passed. This information will be included in a letter to the County Administrator.

Mrs. Collins suggested that consideration be given to drafting a press release on what the Transition Committee has done, what it is currently working on, and what is NOT included under its aegis. Chairman Bischoff agreed this was a good idea and offered to work with Meg Dellay on a press release.

The meeting was convened by Chairman Robert Parete at 6:30 p.m. The chairman advised the committee that representatives from UC Mental Health and Golden Hill Health Care Facility would not be present at the meeting.

**Health Committee
6/26/08**

The UC Department of Health requested continuing the immunization action plan and the comprehensive rabies program. Both involved authorizing the Chairman of the UC Legislature to execute a contract with the NYS DOH. Both were passed.

Dean Palen, Director of the UC DOH, spoke on the recent death of Dr. Neil Lieblich, president of the UC DOH Board, and praised the doctor for having done so much for the local DOH and the community. A resolution to appoint Dr. Thomas Stellato as president of the UC DOH Board to serve out Dr. Lieblich's term through the remainder of 2008 was passed.

A resolution sponsored by UC Mental Health to transfer funds to pay for temporary services was passed. A resolution dealing with a contract previously adopted was rectified to include the New Paltz school district and was passed.

The committee passed a resolution to establish an advisory committee for the development of a rail trail in UC. Trails like this are known to promote heart health.

Mr. Palen reported that several research universities are studying why the bats found in the caves in Rosendale were dying off. He is hoping to learn the results of their investigation soon.

A question was raised as to whether Chairman Parete was accepting names for potential vacancies on committees under the aegis of the Health Committee. Mr. Parete said he would accept names for potential candidates at any time.

The committee then heard a brief report from Rich Parrish, Acting EMS Coordinator.

Eileen Reinhard, Director of Tobacco Free Action Coalition of Ulster County (TFAC) and her associate, Danielle distributed information on a smoke-free law in effect in Livingston County. They reported results of a recent survey of UC residents' opinions on smoke-free environments. The Health Committee will hold a public hearing on August 6th to determine their reaction toward adopting a similar smoke-free law in UC.

Human Development Committee 6/23/08

The Commissioner's Report concerning fiscal matters, programs and salaries was reviewed.

The Commissioner was reminded of the committee request that he work with the towns and villages to bring administration of the Safety Net Program to the county level, rather than handling it on a town and city level. This change would save the county \$245,000.

A resolution authorizing the Chairman of the UC Legislature to enter into an agreement with the NYS Department of Health for the Early Intervention Program for the term October 1, 2008 - September 30, 2009 was passed..

A resolution authorizing the Chairman of the UC Legislature to execute inter-municipal agreements for the Community Work Experience Program, the Domestic Violence

Unit and the Youth Board was passed. There is no financial impact to the county and secures work sites for DSS clients to work off their grants.

A presentation, reviewing the services provided to DSS by different county departments, was delivered by Mr. Caruso. The final review should be at the next committee meeting. The Commissioner indicated he is willing to go to the state to negotiate for such monies as may be owed to the county for these services.

The Commissioner requested approval to extend the contract with CRSR (an advertising agency) to handle a media campaign on what services people might be eligible for, in view of rising living costs. Committee members were concerned about the contract, which they had not reviewed in advance. The legislators directed the Commissioner to advise the committee what he and DSS plan **before** acting particularly if the plans affect the DSS budget.

A motion was made to put a freeze on advertising from June 23 until the next committee meeting except what the county is contractually obligated for. Observations made during the discussion on the motion noted that if there was a need to publicize the services, OFA, ACCESS(local TV), WGHQ, WKNY, etc. and the papers should be used rather than spending additional money for an outside company.

Legislator Loughran repeated his request for a report on the utilization of the various DSS programs as the Commissioner says these programs are underutilized and need to be promoted.

An update was given on RISE, a joint program of DSS and UCCC. The contract was delivered to UCCC June 12. It awaits President Katt's signature.

An update was given on Salient, a pilot program dealing with gathering data from a computer program. Ten other counties participated in the program, which has difficulties in usage. The county paid \$140,000 toward its development.

Ways and Means 7/2/08 and 7/9/08

Both meetings were convened by Chairman Alan Lomita.

The committee dealt with a variety of resolutions dealing with such matters as:
accepting bids for private sale on parcels of county owned property, appropriations for UC Libraries, transfers of funds, entering into agreements with the state for various programs under Probation & Social Services, executing contracts with the NYS DOH to implement a comprehensive rabies program and to continue the immunization action plan, and providing transit service to the New Paltz area (including hiring bus drivers).

Mike Hein, the UC Administrator, informed the committee on budget-related matters, including the following:

- The proposed NYS 2009 budget has reduced allocations by 2%. How that reduction will affect NYS counties is not yet known.

The 2008 budget has also been cut by \$270,000,000, involving some 100 programs, 39 of which are mandated. Although Mr.Hein met with the president and chief budget analyst of the NYS Association of Counties, neither of those officials could say exactly how this would impact Ulster County, but it is believed that the county's cut could be as much as \$290,000. The county is already experiencing increased costs for oil and electricity.

- All UC departments have been asked to review their budgets and find ways to make cuts. These results will reviewed by a sub-committee, appointed by Chairman Lomita.. The budget must be presented to the UC Legislature October 1. A motion to extend that date to October 15 was defeated. Chairman Lomita said he would present the motion again at the August committee meeting when all members absent at the July meeting were expected to be present.

A letter sent to the county Board of Elections by the League of Women Voters of NY State & New Yorkers for Verified Voting triggered discussion on 7-02-08 about the new voting machines purchased by the county. Using the uncertified voting system UC has chosen may, in their view, provide grounds for legal challenges and litigation after the election.

At the 7-9-08 meeting there was additional discussion regarding the new voting system and a resolution to pay the balance owed on the equipment was passed.

The luncheon to honor Elizabeth Askue, Emily Johnson and Shirley Kobran took place as scheduled and it was attended by almost a hundred people. Peter Schickele spoke of his memories of his mother's involvement in the League. She was another League dynamo like Elizabeth and Emily and Shirley.

Martha Kennedy spoke of our need to encourage more membership. Women gained the vote less than a hundred years ago, and some women can't be bothered to vote today. Apathy is a danger to democracy and we must continue to work for an active and informed electorate. The League needs to appeal to the next generation.

Others spoke of working with the honorees and admiring their energy and tenacity. They are Very Special!



League Honorees' Luncheon Report

Prez Sez

Greetings,

I'm writing as I hum the tune to "those lazy days of summer." I don't think that is the case with the Mid-Hudson League. Between globetrotting to places as far as Russia and England, to South America, to Tennessee, to Maine, and throughout New York, much has been accomplished by our members.

Emilie Hauser has again offered her yard for our annual garage sale that is Saturday and Sunday, August 23 -24. This should be your motivation for finally tackling those

long neglected closets and storage areas. Jacki Moriarty and I will be at Emilie's house Monday- Friday, August 19-22 from 9:00-12:00. We hope you will stop in and join in the fun of sorting and pricing and, of course, catching up on the news.

Cindy Bell, Tom Kadgen and Renee Sachs have set up numerous Charter Commission Forums and Candidates' Nights throughout Ulster County beginning September 23rd through October 25th. Educating and informing the public is one of the most valuable services the league provides. Please check the dates in this newsletter. Tell your relatives and neighbors. Plan to attend and bring a friend.

Start thinking of a person who you would like to introduce to our league. September 17th is our Membership potluck supper and is a great way to reconnect with members or to get newly involved. And finally, it is with great pride that I announce that the LWV Mid-Hudson Region is being recognized by the YWCA as "Organization of the Year." Members will receive invitations to this September 19th event. Please plan to attend to share in this honor.

I am still basking in the warm memories of the great time we all had on June 8th. To our wonderful honorees, Elizabeth, Emily and Shirley, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Jean

**Yard Sale
August 23-24 at
63 Highland Avenue,
Kingston**

**Directions:
Highland Ave. is two
streets up East
Chester Street from
Broadway (where
Burger King is).
From E. Chester St,
turn right (east) on
Highland and go two
blocks to dead end, #
63 - a log house with
detached garage.**

Goods needed are:

Appliances (ONLY in good working order)	
Books (children, crafts, cookbooks ONLY)	
Household décor	Clean linens
CDs: music or literature	Sporting goods
Tools	Clean furniture
Current collectibles	Household goods
Toys, puzzles and games	Exercise equipment
Jewelry	

PLEASE DO NOT BRING

**Outdated electronics:
computers, monitors, televisions, radios**
Outdated electric appliances
Clothing
Books (except as listed above)
Broken, chipped, non-functional or outdated items.

LET'S MAXIMIZE THE SMALL SELLING
SPACE WITH GOOD MERCHANDISE TO
GET THE GREATEST DOLLAR VALUE.

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: Individual Membership (\$50)

Household Membership
(\$75)

Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (*tax deductible:*) 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 *Commentator* online ___ or will read it on website ___ or Please mail *Commentator* ___

**(Update the above form and return it to us with your check at
PO Box 3564, Kingston, New York 12402)**

League of Women Voters
Mid-Hudson Region
PO Box 3564
Kingston, NY, 12402

July/August 2008
Commentator