



Commentator

May 2009

Commentator, v.I, i.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 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.

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CALENDAR		
2009		
MAY		
18	10:00	Finance Committee at Margaret Seller's 80 Ringtop Rd, Kingston
18	Noon	Program Committee at Jacki Moriarty's 167 Apple Hill Rd, Hurley
19		Statewide School Budget Vote
20	6:00-8:30	Annual Meeting & Pot-Luck Supper at the Town of Esopus Library, 128 Canal St., Port Ewen
JUNE		
1	10:30	Observer Corp at Monkey Joe's 478 Broadway, Kingston
2	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Emily Hauser's 63 Highland Ave., Kingston.
7	1:00-3:30	Susan B. Anthony luncheon honoring Gloria Plasker for her lifetime of work for the League and Cynthia Bell, Lenore Cane, Thomas Kadgen and Renee Sachs who did so much to make the Ulster County Charter form of government a reality. Wiltwyck Golf Club, 404 Stuart Lane, Kingston (off Lucas Ave near the Thruway overpass)
10	6:15	Public Hearing on amendment of the UC Charter and Administrative Code regarding the size and membership of the Intermunicipal Collaboration Council in the Legislative Chambers
10	1:30 -3:00	Book Repair – Call Elizabeth Askue at 338-1667
AUGUST		
29-30	9:00-3:00	Yard Sale at Emily Hauser's 63 Highland Ave., Kingston

Are you interested in one of our committees? Just show up at a meeting. Our membership is always welcome.

Need a ride? Want to car-pool?
 Contact Jean McGarry, 336-6622 or jfmcg@hvc.rr.com

For updated information, check our Calendar on-line at
<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org/calendar.html>

Commentator archives, State and National League newsletters are at
<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org/Newsletters.html>

Prez Sez...

Greetings,

It is hard to believe another fiscal League year is coming to an end. That means the annual meeting is around the corner. Mark your calendars to attend on May 20th as we wrap up business for the 2008-2009 year and jumpstart 2009- 2010. If you never have attended an annual meeting, what can you expect? Great food and a chance to meet other members top the agenda. Hearing an overview of what our league accomplished in its many committees this past year may boost your interest and spur you on to be involved in some capacity this year. Finally, you have the opportunity to voice your opinion and cast your vote on the budget, the nominating slate and a local proposal. We are a pretty focused organization but we do believe in being flexible and having fun.

And speaking of fun, all those who attended our first honoree luncheon at Wiltwyck Golf Club last June can attest to a wonderful afternoon of celebration and great cuisine. All of you should have received an invitation for our honoree luncheon on June 7th. Come and recognize the efforts of league members Cindy Bell, Lee Cane, Tom Kadgen and Renee Sachs who worked tirelessly throughout the year to insure the passage of the charter form of government.

Circle the dates, May 20th and June 7th. Looking forward to seeing you.

Jean

DUES!



Now that spring has arrived... again... and April's promise of flowers has been fulfilled, you can turn your attention to DUES!

Alright, that's not the most idyllic image to bring to mind so you might want to think about how much depends on your membership dollars. Consider how much work your National, State and Local leagues do each year and the enormous benefit to all of us. Many of us are trying to cut expenses, big and small. Take a look at our proposed budget in last month's Commentator and you'll see your local league is trying also. Many organizations are reporting some decline in membership; we too have lost members..

Dues renewal letters will be sent to local members shortly. Please renew... and maybe make a donation to our Education Fund (tax deductible!). While you're at it, clip the membership form at the end, make some copies, and pass them around to your friends, co-workers and relatives.

PROGRAM NEWS

Our local representative to "Students Inside Albany", sent us the following note:

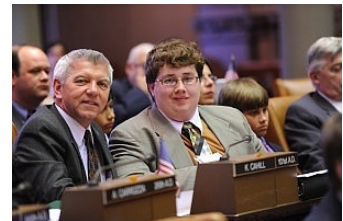
Dear Mrs. McGarry:

As a participant in this year's Students Inside Albany Conference, I want to thank you for the generosity and support of the Mid-Hudson chapter for making it possible for me to attend. The conference was both enjoyable and informative and I appreciate the opportunity of see the inner workings of state government.

Thank you so much again.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Hall



While attending the conference, Ben had the opportunity to shadow Senator William Larkin and Assemblyman Kevin Cahill. Stephanie from LWVNYS forwarded us a terrific photo of Ben and Assemblyman Cahill.

Golden Hill Consensus

On April 18, 2009 the Mid Hudson League of Women Voters presented a program in order to come to consensus on the future of the Golden Hill Health Related Facility in Ulster County. We considered the following questions:

1. Under the current fiscal climate, is maintaining and or renovating the Health Related Facility a feasible option?
2. What would be the financial impact of closing the facility?
3. What is the social impact of closing the facility?
4. What options are available to the County to lessen the impact on patients, families and employees is the HRF were closed?

A summary will be included in the Annual Report which will be posted on our website after the Annual Meeting on May 20th.

2009 YARD SALE

Sat. Aug 29 &
Sun. Aug 30
9 am to 3 pm
Emilie Hauser's
63 Highland Avenue
Kingston, NY

WANTED: GOOD SALABLE ITEMS FOR YARD SALE



Appliances in good working order

Jewelry

Household décor

Clean linens

Books (children, crafts, cookbooks only)

CDs: music or literature Sporting goods

Tools

Clean furniture

Current collectibles

Household goods

Toys, puzzles and games

Exercise equipment

PLEASE DO NOT BRING

Outdated electronics: computers, monitors, televisions, radios

Outdated electric appliances

Clothing

Books (except children's, crafts and cookbooks, must be in good condition)

Any broken, chipped, non-functional or outdated items.

LET'S MAXIMIZE THE SMALL SELLING SPACE

WITH GOOD MERCHANDISE TO GET THE GREATEST DOLLAR VALUE.

Drop-off will take place the two weeks before. Helpers will be needed before, during and after the event.

OBSERVER CORPS REPORTS

Did you know that many government public meetings are on the internet with live streaming video coverage? The Ulster County Legislature has been "webcast" live for a few months. Go to www.totalwebcasting.com/live/ulster on meeting nights for live video and at any other time for archived footage.

Check out www.nysegov.com/webcast.cfm for webcasts of New York State meetings and www.statewidemediaproject.org for other local meetings.

And did you know that the recent legislation, agendas and minutes of the legislatures and committees in Ulster and Dutchess County can be found at <http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/countygov/departments/legislature/clindex.htm> (Dutchess) and <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/legislature.html> (Ulster).

Our Elections Page has links to Dutchess and Ulster County towns and villages websites at http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org/elections.html#Local_Gov_Sites. More and more communities are posting valuable legislative information online to keep us informed.

Date: May 13, 2009

Start: 7:00pm

Chairman David Donaldson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm after The Marlboro High School "Sweet-out-of Lines" performed. 27 legislators were present.

Renee Englander, Doris Lamon and Edward Lamon were presented with Pride of Ulster County awards in recognition of being selected "Senior Citizens of the Year."

The John A. Coleman Catholic High School Girls Varsity Basketball Team was presented with Pride of Ulster County awards in recognition of winning the NYS Public

Ulster County Legislature Monthly Meeting

High School Athletic Association Class D Girls Varsity Basketball Championship

The Public Comment portion included 4 speakers. Paul Fowler spoke on the plight of a county family facing eviction

The agenda included:

In the Non-Consent agenda, a Resolution 142, adopting a methodology to charge the towns and City of Kingston for certain Board of Elections expenses, generated substantial comment. The intent of the legislation is to apportion the costs of conducting elections with reference to actual expenses incurred within each jurisdiction. The charge-back would be paid directly by localities and included in their annual budgets and tax levy. Currently Board of Election costs are included in the general County budget and tax levy spread among localities and individual property owners in relation to equalized assessed values.

Proponents stated that the proposed methodology was more equitable. They pointed out that the share paid in some towns would reduce while in others it would increase. Opponents stated that enacting a charge-back to localities exposed them to a cost over which they had no control or representation and was similar to unfunded mandates imposed upon counties by the state.

A vote of the majority of the Legislature was required rather than a majority of those in attendance. The measure failed despite having received a majority of the legislators present.

Other items approved by the legislature included employment agreements with the Sheriff and the Sheriff's Employees and the UCCC Professional and Administrative Personnel unions, acceptance and rejection bids for properties sold at public auction on April 22nd, authorizing re-conveyance of lands acquired for non-payment of taxes to original owners upon payment of the full back-due taxes, setting June 10th as the date for a public hearing on adding lands to agricultural districts.

Of particular note, a public hearing will be held on June 2nd, 6:15 in the Legislative Chambers of the County Office Building regarding a local law to amend the Charter and Administrative Code with respect to the size and membership of the Intermunicipal Collaboration Council ..

A number of contract and budget matters were adopted as part of the "Consent Agenda."

Jean and Jim McGarry

Public Hearing on Plastic Bag Fee

Date: May 6, 2009

Start: 6:00pm End: 7:30

Forceful arguments on the pros and cons of charging shoppers 10¢ for each plastic bag used to pack their purchases were heard. Below is a sample of remarks:

Michael Veet, Woodstock Environmental Commission- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle with reducing the use of plastic bags the best option.

Valerie Georgu - 84 billion plastic bags used per year. Goal should be to entirely eliminate.

Steve Rosario, American Chemistry Council, plastic bag industry, 70% less energy to produce plastic bags.

Jim Rodgers, Grocery and Food Industry Alliance, opposes fees, will be counterproductive, will push consumers to use paper, undermining the strides made in plastic bag recycling.

Frank Rosario, Hannaford Supermarkets, opposed to fee, committed to recycling, presently recycles 65% of plastic and paper

Len Bernardo, fears we are over legislating, need to educate public, not charge

Ann Brandt, Who gets the 10¢ fee?

Nick Woerner, Town of Ulster Supervisor, acknowledged that as business hub of Ulster County, Town of Ulster faces the greatest environmental challenge of plastic bags, "we are the problem, not plastic bags," recommended that more stores give discounts to customers who use recycled bags

Many speakers were concerned about the adverse effects of plastic bags caused by littering and feel the fee will help eliminate the problem.

Jean McGarry

**Ulster County
Economic
Development,
Housing, Planning &
Transit Committee**

Date: 4/22/09 Start Time: 6:02 p.m. Finish Time: 8:13 p.m.

Chairman Hector Rodriquez introduced Lance Matteson, president of the Ulster County Development Corporation (UCDC) to discuss various economic development subjects and the strategic initiatives of UCDC. Much of the emphasis is on outreach and readiness of existing businesses. Chairman Rodriquez asked about how many companies are being contacted and he emphasized the importance of keeping up on the news and even rumors about companies. Other legislators, including Catherine Terrizzi, Peter Loughran and Gary Bischoff, asked about and discussed the readiness of properties and availability of funds including from the Federal stimulus package.

Officers (Mike DiTullo, Frank Falatyn, and Paul Hakim) of the The Solar Energy Consortium (TSEC) were present to make a presentation (Mike DiTullo) and discuss the current business attraction initiative and activities related to Ulster County and the Department of Energy, and UCDC. There was some discussion of other alternative energy projects, including comments about wind energy projects.

Lydia Reidy, Executive Director of Cornell Co-operative, discussed several topics in common with the UC legislature: an internet Listserve about human services, environmental and storm water matters, food security, additional lands to Agriculture Districts, and the Farmland Protection Board.

Dennis Doyle, UC Director of Planning, discussed items about transportation, tourism, housing, the Open Space Partnership and a Main Street grant.

Prompted by Legislator Peter Loughran there was an extended discussion about the revitalization of railway from Kingston westward toward the Catskills. Legislator Wayne Harris proposed the committee invite the Railroad Advisory Board to the committee's next meeting concerning a resolution/RFP. The committee agreed.

Vic Melville, rev. 5/14/09

**Ulster County
Environmental
Committee**

Date: 4/15/09 Start Time: 6:02 p.m. Finish Time: 6:35 p.m.

Chairman Brian Shapiro acknowledged Amanda LaValle, UC Environmental Coordinator, to report on a many on-going and planned projects and community/municipalities outreach activities. These include: a storm water report concerning MS-4 designations, a protecting the biosphere conference, energy and sustainability activities, recycling in UC buildings. UC has been awarded a grant regarding energy efficiency and conservation strategies, and a NYSERTA grant and green innovation grants are coming thru for municipalities and the county. Legislator Gary Bischoff questioned if plastic bag programs are being considered.

Legislator Hector Rodriquez presented a draft document regarding pesticides. There was considerable discussion about the content and intent of the proposal and if it should be proposed as a law or a policy. Further discussions are expected with the legislature. Legislator Kevin Roberts proposed a public hearing be held.

Vic Melville, rev. 5/14/09

**Public Works and
Capital Projects
Committee**

The Legislative Public Works and Capital Projects meeting was convened at 5 PM on 5-12-09 by Chairman Peter Loughran and adjourned at 5:45.

The members of the committee were present with the exception of Legislators Decker and Sheeley. Additionally County Attorney Havranek and the Commissioner of Public Works David Sheeley and Wally Cox and associate were also present.

The main resolution that the committee dealt with was draft resolution dealing with establishing a pedestrian and bicycle policy when developing new construction, reconstruction and maintenance projects developed by UC unless one two conditions is met: i.e., that such facilities would be provided elsewhere or the cost of establishing such bikeways or walkways was excessively disproportionate (exceeding 20% of the cost of the larger project) to the need or probable use.

While the committee generally favored the concept of establishing such capabilities, the members felt that the resolution was too restrictive and at the present time with the economy being what it is, that the county does not have the money to support a policy as worded in the resolution.

Wally Cox and his associate spoke in support of the draft resolution. The committee decided to accept Commissioner Sheeley's offer to evaluate what other counties have done and report back in June.

County Attorney Havranek explained why a resolution dealing with conveying property

Ulster County Human Development and Personnel Committee

to a prospective buyer would have to be changed; and once done the committee will sign off and the property in question sold to the person seeking to buy it.

Commissioner Sheeley reported that the engineer he just hired has decided to leave and pursue his master's degree (a new engineer is being sought); the department is using stimulus monies on some of its projects; and it is preparing to start working on road repairs.

The committee briefly discussed changing the date of its regular monthly meeting, but no decision was made. Time will be allotted at the June meeting for discussion.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

Legislative Ways and Means Committee

The Legislative Human Development and Personnel Committee was convened by Chairman Don Gregorious at 4:15 on 5-6-09 and adjourned at 4:23. Members were all present except for Legislators Loughran and Terizzi.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Committee had one resolution to deal with: amending the 2009 UC Budget to allow for the receipt of \$48,000 of Federal dollars for Child Support Incentive Allocation (DSS). There will be no cost to the county. Approved.

Legislator Terpening will check with Rob Parete and the Health Committee regarding Timothy's Law and the possibility of a memorializing resolution by the Legislature.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

The Legislative Ways and Means Committee Special Meeting was convened by Chairman Alan Lomita on April 15, 2009 at 3PM and adjourned at 3:37 PM.

Members of the committee were present.

The purpose of this meeting was to determine whether to honor the town's requests to remove certain parcels of land from the auction to be held April 22.

Following discussion, the committee voted to remove various parcels in Gardiner, Rochester and Rosendale from public auction.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

The Legislative Ways and Means Committee was convened by Chairman Alan Lomita at 4:45 on May 6, 2009 and adjourned at 5:45. Members of the committee were present.

There were 18 resolutions that the committee dealt with; all were passed. These will now be taken up at the regular meeting of the Legislature on May 13.

The resolutions dealing with contracts involving county employees caused comment as to approving them or not. The observation was made that since the contracts were negotiated in good faith sometime ago; it would not be right to not approve. It was also felt that in the future contract negotiations would be handled differently as a result of changes brought about under the Charter.

In discussing the various contracts that were covered by resolution that the Legislature would have to approve, it was suggested by Legislator Provenzano that the Comptroller should be asked to provide comment on contracts of this type; Chairman Lomita said he would check on having this done.

The contract dealing with providing comprehensive health care for the inmates at the UC Jail results in the request to have an explanation provided for the cost given that more than 7 million dollars in a 3 year period is involved. The contract manager, Sarah Van Sicklen, was asked to evaluate and provide an explanation.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

The Association of Town Supervisors

The Association of Town Supervisors meeting of was convened on April 21, 2009 by President John Valk (T/Shawangunk) at 8:30 AM and adjourned at 9:49 AM.

In addition to the town supervisors and clerks from various UC towns, the County Executive (CE) Michael Hein, Commissioners of the Board of Elections Mihm (D) and Turco (R) and Juaana Leandry of the US Census Bureau were in attendance.

Initially, CE Michael Hein spoke. He reminded everyone that he had previously mentioned that the county was working on finding ways to have everyone work together since all serve the same taxpayers. In doing so he hopes to develop better relationships and communication between the county and the towns.

As a first step the county has added to its website a Municipal Resources link. It uses

categories that the towns would most likely use (demographics, economic development, etc.). He asked that everyone examine, critique it good, bad, etc. and let his office know.

Further, he noted that the shared Municipal Services Study which has a mitigation plan is being developed; each town must have such a plan that is approved to be eligible for FEMA funds.

Additionally, the county is developing a database which will be a repository of information re municipalities and have a section for Best Practices to which association members may contribute as well as use.

The next order of business was related to election charge-back costs and polling places consolidation.

The Commissioners of the Board of Elections, Mihm and Turco brought the members up to date and conducted a Q & A as well.

A primary concern of the towns was charge back on actual costs to the individual towns, not all of which have been totally ironed out.

The Commissioners met with representatives of the U.S. Department of Justice and the federal court...the county must comply, must have a plan to use the new machines rather than the lever machines, state must certify, as after 9-1-09 the lever machines cannot be used. Help America Vote Act (HAVA) has brought about these changes and requirements.

There is a pilot program involving 5 districts and 2 polling places that the county is involved with to help effect the transition.

Election inspectors must now attend class which is located in Kingston. Cost of mileage to the town is of concern as apparently county mileage rate which is more than what towns allow is used. This results in no incentive to car pool or use town cars per one comment.

For a general election 800 poll workers are needed. It is difficult to find workers. It is felt it is better if the inspectors come from within the town as they know their own people.

The consolidation of polling places is viewed in a positive way as it helps to reduce costs, provide greater security of safety for the votes cast. The project has reduced polling places from 108 to 103 and in 2010 will be revisited.

A question on absentee ballots resulted in the comment that filing a complete application was the key to getting this type of ballot.

The new machines are currently stored at the old jail; have been certified at the federal level; but the state has yet to certify the new machines as a result of the problems that have come up from who puts the new ones together.

The last part of the program presented by Juaana Leandry, the county liaison, dealt with the upcoming census to be held in 2010. Very important for each state to do it correctly as Federal aid to the states will be determined from these figures.

The US Census Bureau will use a short form that will be bi-lingual and have 10 questions. This is just to get the count and goes to everyone.

The American Community Survey will employ the long form, which has a number of questions dealing with a variety of topics; and one in five households will receive.

Initially census workers are now coming around, knock on door, introduce themselves, provide small written explanation paper, and verify the address.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

I/we wish to become members of the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2010

Name: _____

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 _____

Will receive *Commentator* _____ online &/or read it on website or _____ Please mail *Commentator*

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

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