



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 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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Commentator

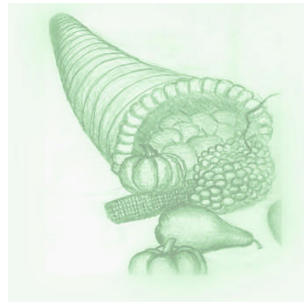
November 2009

CALENDAR		
2009		
NOVEMBER		
20	7:30am	Meet 'n Greet the Ulster County Legislature Candidates at Deisings, 111 North Front St, Kingston
26		Happy Thanksgiving
DECEMBER		
1	7:15-9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria Plasker's 106 Park Ave., Hurley
13	2:00-400	Holiday Party at Moriarty's is CANCELLED

Due to circumstances beyond our control, we regret that the scheduled moderator training had to be canceled and that our annual Christmas gathering will also be canceled.

The next Commentator will be a December/January edition published shortly after the new year.

Stay tuned for 2010! In the meantime, we wish you all the happiest of holidays and a very Happy New Year.



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

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

MEMBERS: Need a ride? Want to car-pool?

Contact Jean McGarry, 336-6622 or jfmcg@hvc.rr.com

Interested in one of our committees? Just show up at a meeting.
Our members are always welcome.

Prez Sez...

Greetings,

The elections are over and there is a collective sigh of relief in the air. Certainly the candidates were exhausted from campaigning and the voters were happy to be free of the daily barrage of visual reminders. (Let's hope all the signs and flyers have found their way to the nearest recycling bin.)

Thanksgiving is around the corner. It's a wonderful time to reflect on all we have and to give thanks. While we all tend to be "glazed over" by Election Day, think about how it would be if individuals had no opportunity to throw their hat in the ring and to call for change in government. Think about if no one cared about good government and everyone sat on the sidelines content with "business as usual." Think about living in a society where free expression is not a way of life.

And finally, think about all the League of Women Voters does to promote good government by offering citizens numerous opportunities to be informed and educated. From publishing a voters' guide to moderating to observing public meetings to advocating for the integrity of the new county charter as well as providing a forum on the environment, we have served as a tremendous voice of action and change this Fall.

Kudos to all those league members whose diligence and dedication have so well served the community and a hardy thank you from a very proud and grateful president.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Jean

**OBSERVER
CORPS REPORTS****LINKS:**

Ulster County Legislature webcast - live & archived:
www.totalwebcasting.com/live/ulster

New York State meeting webcasts: www.nysegov.com/webcast.cfm

Other local meetings: www.statewidemediaproject.org

Recent legislation, agendas and minutes of the legislatures:

<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/countygov/departments/legislature/clindex.htm>
(Dutchess) <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/legislature.html> (Ulster).

<http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/committeesinfo/index.html> (Ulster County)

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.

**Ulster County
Legislature Budget
Report**

As an aid to the deliberations of the Legislature, the accounting firm of O'Connor Davies Munns & Dobbins, LLP was engaged to evaluate the proposed 2010 budget with the understanding that the County's financial stability is of paramount importance. The focus of their report is financial in nature and does not encompass policy issues, which are the purview of the Legislature but does include opinions regarding the reasonableness of various anticipated expenses and revenues.

As neither space nor editorial talent permits a meaningful summary of the report, readers are urged to view the oral summary presented before the October 10th Legislature meeting (see the Legislature webcast link above) and download it from <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/downloads/Ulster%20County%20Budget%20Report.pdf> You can also obtain a copy from the clerk of the County Legislature.

In a nutshell, it appears the audit shows a very modest expenditure increase and a reasonable tax levy increase (if any increase can be considered reasonable) but observes that the budget relies heavily on fund balance (surplus funds) to achieve a balanced budget. The auditors caution that fiscal policy decisions made for 2010 will have substantial impacts in 2011.

**Ulster County
Legislature Meeting**

With some 30 items on the Legislative Agenda, 8 minutes was all that was necessary to adopt the legislation or refer matters to committee. In a commendable display of bipartisan cooperation, the voting was unanimous, except in two or three instances, and without comment.

Among the most notable matters referred to committee was, for the third month, the

Ulster County Board of Health

resolution to transfer funds within the current budget in order to pay a substantial medical hospitalization bill of a County Jail inmate. The issue continues to be clouded with unanswered questions and unresolved issues. SEE the Legislative Ways and Means Committee reports (2) below for further information. You may wish to revisit our Observer Corp Legislative Ways and Means Committee reports in prior Commentators to track the history of this resolution.

Jean and Jim McGarry

The UC Board of Health was convened at 7:32 PM by Dr. Stellato, President on October 19, 2009 and adjourned at 8:56. Members were present except for Marion Ostrander. Other attendees were Acting Director of DOH Veytia, Kevin DuMond, Acting Coordinator of Environmental Sanitation, County Attorney Havranek, Dr. Severin, UC Medical Examiner, DCE Beckman.

Initially, minutes of the September 14 meeting were approved. Following that, Joan Authenrieth was elected Vice-President of the Board (when president is absent, she will preside). An additional position (that of secretary) was filled as well. The Board Secretary does not actually take meeting minutes, but rather has other duties such as reviewing those minutes taken by the Board Clerk, Karen Salazar, signing off on them, etc. Dr. Tack of the Board was designated Secretary.

DCE Beckman then reported on the selection of the new Director of Public Health: Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck. While it took about nine months to arrive at his selection, UC Legislature approved his selection this past week and so far there have been very positive comments from those who have met with him and from the references contacted by DCE Beckman.

In order for the Board to have the opportunity to meet Dr. Hasbrouck, the November Board meeting will be November 16, which is also his first day of work

The enforcement procedure for hearing and hearing officer was then taken up. Member Clegg and Mrs. Havranek noted that there had been 4-5 applicants received, but had narrowed the choice to one: Louis Klein, an attorney, former UC chairman, experienced in this area of work. He must have proper malpractice insurance and a contract which is presently in place as he was previously hired by UC to handle disciplinary matters. At this point the Board moved into executive session to discuss the other applicants in considering having more than one person to consider.

Upon returning, the Board approved the motion to accept Louis Klein as hearing officer and if a conflict arose to select an ad hoc to replace him. His present contract will be amended to allow him to proceed as hearing officer.

The Menu Labeling Law was briefly taken up. Members noted that seeing the calories posted on the menu had influenced some of them to select items with fewer calories. While there has been some resistance to the postings, the answer is that affected businesses must comply as it is the law. Mrs. Havranek noted in response to an inquiry that she did not believe there was nothing in the law to assess results. DCE Beckman thought possibly in the future maybe a survey could be done.

As to the Wawarsing-Delaware Aqueduct Status, Mrs. Havranek reviewed briefly the background (ongoing for 20 years), that the county had withdrawn its intent to fine NYC when the latter threatened legal action, and that she has spoken to legal counsel in NYC who will be sending her a brief review of present status. While the Board members appeared to have mixed reactions to the matter, it decided to wait until the status report on the studies being done was received and talk at the next meeting to determine a plan of action.

The final topic for discussion dealt with seasonal flu and H1N1 flu. AD Veytia reported that the last public clinic was October 9 as UCDOH had run out of the seasonal flu vaccine. Based on communication from supplier she could not say when the next shipment would be available, possibly late November, in order to set up the clinics again. As a consequence those seeking such at this time are being advised to contact their physicians. Apparently Wal-Mart, Walgreens do have such vaccine available.

As to the injunction v. health care workers being required to get the vaccine. Local DOH cannot enforce the mandate to get the vaccine regardless if it does not have the vaccine.

As to the H1N1 vaccine. Those who provide it, must put in orders starting October

Ulster County Legislative Oversight Committee

20: doctors, pharmacists, and DOH. However, there is no indication when the vaccine will be sent. DCD, NYS DOH and Local DOH are 3 areas of delivery. Must follow rules: call in to SDOH as to usage, what is wasted, what target groups dealt with, follow rules.

There was a brief comment on the proposed county budget released recently. Difficult seemed to be an apt adjective used by those present.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

The Legislative Oversight committee dealing with capital projects at UCCC was convened at 4:00PM on 11-10-09 by Chairman Zimet and adjourned at 4:13. Members present except for Legislator Loughran. Additionally, President Katt and Cornelia Denver from UCCC were present.

The principal matter for discussion dealt with Resolution 317 amending capital project no. 286 regarding the work done to upgrade the nursing lab at UCCC and the equipping and furnishing of the lab.

President Katt provided a brief overview of what the financial picture had been: the construction of the lab had been approved previously at \$425,000. The actual cost came in at \$293,497. Given that it had been determined that the equipment/furnishing would cost more, the request was made to transfer \$67,611 from the construction saving to the former budget. Following discussion the Oversight Committee passed the resolution.

It was noted that the nursing program at UCCC would have 80 students in fall, 2010. A further point was how important having this program was given the need for nurses and that SUNY, New Paltz was phasing out its nursing program.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

Ulster County Human Development & Personnel Committee

The Legislative Human Development and Personnel Committee was convened by Chairman Gregorius at 4:28 on 11-4-09 and adjourned at 4:35. Members were present except for Hansut and Terrizzi. Provenzano left and returned.

The committee had reviewed the resolutions to be voted on, each dealing with an item to amend the 2009 budget: to increase funding for child care, handicapped children, etc.; dealing with the LTC Point of Entry IV and the Amy Watkins Casework Education Program...all dealing with items from the Department of Social Services. The resolutions were all passed.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

Ulster County Legislative Ways and Means Committee

The Legislative Ways and Means Committee was convened by Chairman Lomita at 4:45 on 11-4-09 and adjourned at 5:43. Members present.

There were 20 resolutions to be dealt with. Nineteen were passed, some with varying degrees of discussion.

The resolution dealing with the payment of the medical bill for the inmate being held at the UC Jail was again the subject of considerable discussion. Once again the inmate has had to be hospitalized. Both DCEs Beckman and Sudlow were present to explain what had been the most recent attempt to deal with the matter and answer questions. Among the concerns expressed: what are the provisions of the contract that the county has with Correctional Medical Care (CMC); what are the latter's responsibilities regarding paying the hospital; why was it taking quite so long to determine what the precise Medicaid rates are so that the county DSS can submit its claim for reimbursement. To assist the committee in making its determination, Comptroller Auerbach was asked to review the contract and other aspects for the next meeting, November 10 (November 11 is a holiday). He advised that he would do so and work with the County Attorney. The committee elected to address the matter on November 10.

Chairman Lomita advised that the budget consultants would make a presentation to the full Legislature on November 10. In the week following there would be three public hearings regarding the proposed 2010 UC budget. November 23 is the last day for appeals that any organizations, etc. may have re the budget. Four days have been set aside to consider such.

The Legislative Ways and Means Committee was convened at 5:15 on 11-10-09 by Chairman Lomita and adjourned at 5:50. Members present. Other attendees included Art Smith, Budget Director, Elliott Auerbach, Comptroller, Andy Kossover, Public Defender.

The primary concern for the committee was how to resolve the handling of the medical bills of the inmate in the county jail. This matter was a hold over from the October meeting.

Mr. Kossover, the Public Defender advised the committee that while he and the DA, Holly Carnright, have not read the report on the inmate, submitted by the psychiatrists, the latter have said the inmate is fit to be sentenced.

Judge McDonough has said he would move to proceed with the sentencing quickly. However, he is presently presiding over a trial up state. He will come to UC when it is over and proceed with the sentencing; his arrival is expected early next week. The judge has agreed to go to the jail, if necessary, in order to perform the sentencing.

Mr. Kossover noted that within 24-48 hours of being sentenced, the inmate would be transferred to a state facility, which would need to have hospital facilities available given the array of medical problems that the inmate suffers from. Marcy is one facility that is being considered.

In responding to a question regarding the possibility of an appeal, Mr. Kossover noted that there is an automatic appeal filed in a murder case: can result in the lower court being affirmed, reversed or remanded for a new trial.

The remainder of the meeting was a dialogue between Comptroller Auerbach and the members of the committee.

The Comptroller's position was that the matter was strictly a financial matter. The county has already paid \$37,000 since January 1, 2009, which had been paid by the sheriff's department through vouchers. However, he noted that no one has seen the bills, and none have been produced for the Comptroller's office to examine. He did note that at this time his office has examined the contract that the county has with CMC (Correctional Medical Care).

The Comptroller advised the committee that he would suggest that \$187,000 which is what the bill for medical services is now (through July, 2009...and there will probably be more until such time as the inmate is transferred), be transferred from the contingency fund into a medical services account earmarked and encumbered for this inmate so that when and if the bill had to be paid it could be. None of the \$187,000 would be spent until the Comptroller's office approved such spending (he later pointed out that not having the dollars readily available to settle, to pay, will inhibit his office to get a lower sum).

Members of the committee expressed concerns about costs, whether the contract with CMC had been evaluated as well as observing that they had attempted to resolve the questions around what rates the county was being billed, i.e. Medicaid or other. An additional question raised by a committee member was who would negotiate with the state with respects to the rates, etc., and once that was determined, when did the Comptroller expect to receive the bills and how long would it take for the latter to review such. A further concern voiced by a committee member was what was the process being used that allowed the payment of the \$37,000? Is the County being properly billed?

The Comptroller stated that his office, DSS and a consultant versed in such matters would do the negotiating; it would take about two weeks to review the bills, which he expected to receive from the sheriff's department 11-11 (the Under Sheriff could not provide such for the \$37,000 when initially asked). At that point in the meeting, the Under Sheriff arrived and delivered the bills to the Comptroller (apparently over 150 pages worth).

Further, the Comptroller indicated his staff will review to determine whether the county has been properly billed at the Medicaid rate.

Chairman Lomita then moved that the matter be referred to the committee for its December 7 meeting, at which time it will review the acquired information to be provided by the Comptroller.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

**Ulster County
Legislative
Administrative
Services Committee**

The Legislative Administrative Services Committee meeting was convened by Chairman Provenzano at 5:00 PM on 10-20-09 and adjourned at 5:45. All members present. Other attendees were DCE Robert Sudlow, IS Director Sylvia Wohfahrt, Comptroller Auerbach, Dorothy Martin.

Following the approval of minutes for 9-15-09, the Director of IS updated the committee on the status of purchasing and implementing an integrated financial management system. The present system has definite limitations. In 2008 an RFP was sent out; 6-7 responses were received; 3 vendors were considered. Due to the ensuing economic problems, the project was put on hold. The county wishes to resubmit the RFP and refresh the bids. It was noted that any cost incurred to train county staff to sue the new system was included in the original bids; which ranged from \$724,957 to \$1, 860,000. Chairman Provenzano stated that this must first be passed as a capital projects. Once that is done the committee could then send a letter to the county executive to urge adoption of the plan and to move forward. The Comptroller noted how much he supports this project and his letter to the chairman expressing his reasons.

The program initially suggested by Legislator Brian Cahill, Posting Department Reports was reviewed by the IS Director. Apparently this program has not moved forward.

The final item on the agenda dealt with the resolution establishing the county equalization rates. Following some discussion, the committee passed the resolution.

During open discussion, the committee talked about the proposed budget, the fact that the various groups seeking financial help, ie. Cornell Cooperative, the libraries, etc. had called the legislators with concerns over the cuts that are being made.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

**The Ulster County
Association of
Town Supervisors**

The meeting of the T/Supervisors was convened at 8:40 on 10-20-09 by John Valk, Supervisor of T/Shawangunk, President and adjourned at 10:15.

The next meeting will be November 17. A luncheon is being considered for the December meeting on 12-15-09.

Initially, County Executive Michael Hein spoke with the group regarding the recently released proposed county budget. Among his comments: understands how difficult matters are; not only for county but for towns; all the personnel removals came from the executive branch: 48 vacancies, 22 early retirements; and 30 layoffs; very difficult choices had to be made; a \$7.8 million dollar short fall in the sales tax; claw backs could still occur from the state due to the \$4 billion dollar plus deficit; county payroll in 2010 will be down \$500,000; froze salaries of 143 non-union employees; he has been engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the unions.

The next presentation was from C.T. Male Associates regarding the safety of the various dams in UC, their design and what the inspection requirements are. The presentation was informative and very detailed. Based on the material distributed there are 23 dams in UC, local government apparently tends to own the high hazard dams. Newly adopted State DEC Safety Regulations as of August, 2009 divides the dams into three hazard classes: low, medium and high.

The third agenda item was a brief presentation from DSS Commissioner Rodriguez. He noted that the Winter Watch heating program initiated in the 2008-09 season had received a NARCO award; handed out material dealing with HEAP for the 2009-2010 heating season, which starts Nov. 2: there will be more vendors generally (vendors can provide gauges and thermostats), there are three emergency vendors; when tank is at the ¼ mark the customer should order. He noted that there have been over 1500

Early applicants, 3000 other applications not yet responded to; DSS has designated sites county wide with staff working 35 hour week plus 5 hours to deal with the anticipated volume. He also noted that the Food Stamp Program would be called SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and as of October 14 be totally automated.

A last point was that DSS is seeing a new type of client, those never seen before.

A final item dealt with the status of the Shared Services Study from

Barbara Murphy, VP of Pattern for Progress. She noted that Dr. Benjamin has completed the initial analysis and the drafts are being evaluated. T/Supervisors will be

called with wrap up questions and public hearings must be held.

There were no minutes or treasurer's report to approve, nor has the salary survey been completed. During general discussion members spoke about the individual town fiscal concerns which were reflective of the present economic problems.

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) \$ _____

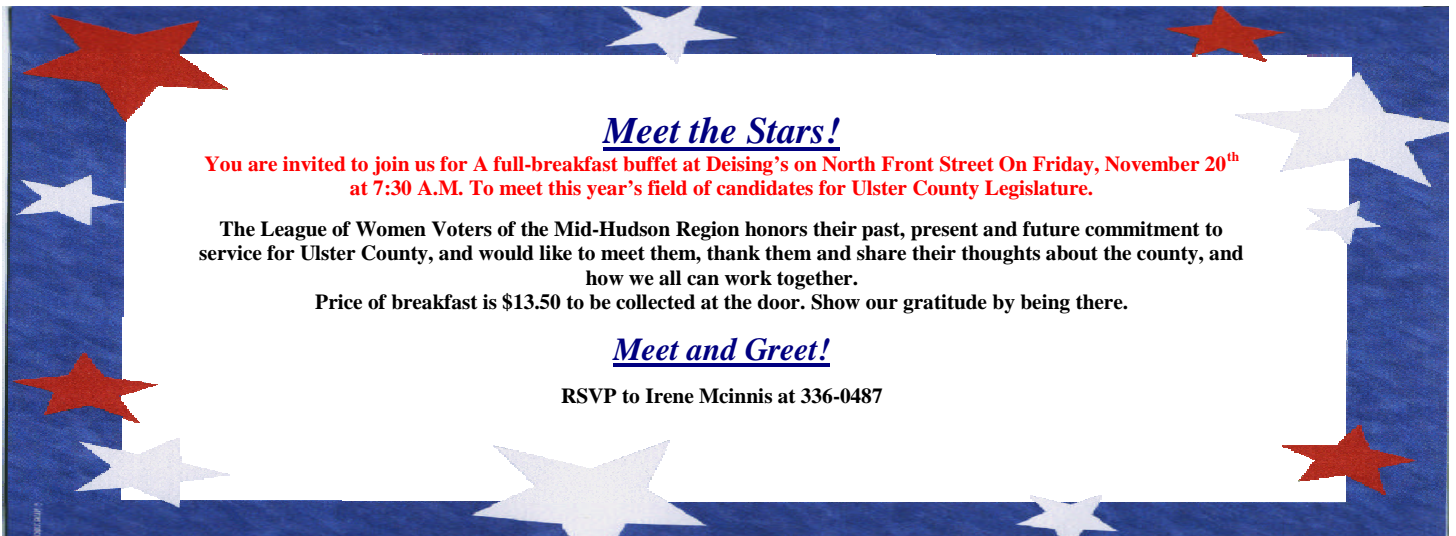
If you are upgrading to a Household Membership, please
include the name and email address of new members _____

Will receive *Commentator* ____ online &/or will 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)**

League of Women Voters
Mid-Hudson Region
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November 2009
Commentator



Meet the Stars!

You are invited to join us for A full-breakfast buffet at Deising's on North Front Street On Friday, November 20th at 7:30 A.M. To meet this year's field of candidates for Ulster County Legislature.

The League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region honors their past, present and future commitment to service for Ulster County, and would like to meet them, thank them and share their thoughts about the county, and how we all can work together.

Price of breakfast is \$13.50 to be collected at the door. Show our gratitude by being there.

Meet and Greet!

RSVP to Irene Mcinnis at 336-0487