



Commentator February/March 2008

Mid-Hudson Region
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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

MARCH

4 7:15 to 9:15
29 10:00 to 12

Board meeting at Gloria's
Golden Hill Health Related Facility: **To Be or Not to Be**
Local Study group will review their findings on the Ulster County Nursing Home, followed by members meeting to discuss your ideas for future local programs. Meeting will be at 10 AM, Kingston City Hall, Council Chambers.

APRIL

1 7:15 to 9:15
26 10:00 to 12

Board meeting at Jacki's
Panel discussion with community leaders on the future of the Golden Hill Health Care Facility. Meeting to be held in the Kingston City Hall Council Chambers from 10 AM until noon.

MAY

Monday, 5 7:15 to 9:15
13 6:00 to 8:30

Board meeting, place to be announced
Annual members' meeting and potluck at Unitarian Universalist Church on Sawkill Road, Kingston

JUNE

3 7:15 to 9:15
8 1:00 to 4 PM

Board meeting, place to be announced
Luncheon at Wiltwyck Country Club

. 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 of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region 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

Prez Sez...

Greetings,

Super Tuesday is behind us. The excitement and interest in this presidential election can be measured by the numerous telephone and e-mail inquiries we received before the New York primary. At every turn, in the work lounges, in the supermarket, at the local gyms, and at the dinner table, people want to discuss this presidential election. Most heartening is the number of young people who have expressed interest in this election. They are inquisitive about the process, eager to discuss the candidates and excited about the prospect of being able to vote in November. We need to seize upon this opportunity and keep their momentum going. Encourage their dialogue. Make sure that voter registration drives occur at their high schools and colleges. And finally, promote the League of Women Voters as their best tool for staying informed and receiving credible information.

As I am energized and hopeful by the display of interest in this campaign season, I remain frustrated that it has taken so long for me to relay to my high school seniors what type of voting machine they can expect to use next fall. Should such phrases as "partisan politics" and "special interest favoritism" be introduced as part of their lesson in democratic governance? No. I won't yield to the lure of apathy and cynicism. I'll continue to hope that within the next week, the citizens of Ulster County will be given that long awaited answer. Stay tuned.

Jean

Ed. Note: Since this was written, the choice of machine has been made for this year and is an optical scan machine.

Postponement

The weather did not cooperate with our scheduled meeting for February 23rd, and the meeting has been rescheduled for March 29th at City Hall at 10:00. This is a preliminary meeting for the general session on April 26th, at which we will present a number of panelists to the public.

The reason for two meetings is that this is a very complex subject and we need to become educated ourselves to ask sensible questions of the panel. As the population ages there are expense considerations and quality of life issues. What do people want, what do they need, how can this be managed, and how can it be supported financially?

We are not the only group looking at the future of Golden Hill and other ways to provide services to the elderly. The Burger Report, which called for hospital mergers and coordination to avoid duplicated and expensive services, also addressed nursing homes and changes to them. The Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Health Care in Ulster County is also looking at the issue, and Lee Cane has been attending their meetings.

**Come One, Come All
to the
Susan B. Anthony Luncheon**

**June 8th at 1:00
Wiltwyck Golf Club**

**To honor three special members:
Elizabeth Askue
Emily Johnson
Shirley Kobran**

**For their continued faithful service to the League of Women Voters.
Without them, the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region could not have
succeeded.**

Peter Schickele will talk about his mother's dedication to the LWV.

Martha Kennedy, President of the LWV of New York State,
will be present and will speak about the League.

Luncheon will be a buffet with beverages including soft drinks.
There will be a cash bar.

SAVE THE DATE!

Blue Ribbon Health Care Panel

The Blue Ribbon Health Care Services Advisory Panel met on January 22nd at the Ulster County Office Building. Chaired by Steve Kelly of the Ellenville Regional Hospital, the committee continues its evaluation of material on Golden Hill Health Care Center to determine what it will recommend as to the Center's future.

Mark Lyons of SWBR Architects, located in Rochester, New York, had been invited to conduct a Power Point presentation dealing with examples of design work using new alternatives in nursing home construction. Previously, Mr. Lyons' firm had provided a second opinion on the cost analysis that had been done in 2004, which he had delivered in 2005.

Some of these alternatives that were included in Mr. Lyons' presentation include the Eden concept, the Green House example and the Community Care sample.

During the discussions that occurred throughout the presentation, the members talked about whether the Center could be renovated or not, how skilled nursing could be provided in these new settings, what would be involved if a new nursing home was constructed, what to do with the old structure, etc. No determinations were made.

The panel met again on February 11th at Gateway Community Industries. In attendance were Steve Kelley, Dr. Peter Roberts, Françoise Dunefsky and Sheree Cross. Robert Parete and Tony Marmo were absent.

Following a tour of the facility conducted

by Mrs. Dunefsky, the Executive Director of Gateway, the committee was convened. The group reviewed the work that had been covered at the last meeting and determined that renovating the existing facility was still not a final recommendation.

As to what should be done, the committee decided it would require the following information:

- a) **Planning:** From the Ulster County Planning Board, demographic information regarding the current Ulster County population and projection for 5-10 years or more of how the population is aging, particularly 85 and over.
- b) **Current status:** A review of existing nursing homes in Ulster County as to age, bed capacity, utilization, whether need for beds is being met (considering that in recent years there have been fewer people in hospitals waiting to be transferred to a nursing home), and what effect this would have in the next 10-12 years as the facilities age. Sheree Cross will provide this information, which may explain why it would be important to replace the present structure.
- c) **Fiscal:** cost for bed construction, which will necessitate a call to the architect. Does the current number of beds needed suggest a need for the same number or more in the future? Will changes be made to reimbursement figures in the future? How would changing the base year from 1983 to 2002 affect the center?

How would federal and state proposed budgets affect the center? It was felt that there was a need to engage a reimbursement specialist from the NYS Department of Health to provide clarification. Would the Center's subsidy from the county be affected? If so, what should the county then do?

- d) **Technology and new models:** How new technology, e.g. electronic medical records, making homes more technologically friendly (cameras, lifelines, etc.) and new construction models, i.e. Eden, Green House, etc., would impact the future was touched on.

The panel also agreed that it was very important to be able to make suggestions for possible use of the present structure if a new facility was constructed. The panel believes it should review the survey of county buildings' usage when it is completed. The panel agreed that it had a responsibility to the community at large to cover all this material carefully in order to make a well-reasoned recommendation.

The panel will meet March 24 in the conference room at Golden Hill and April 8 in the Ulster County Office Building Administrative Conference Room. Meetings start at 6 PM.

Lee Cane, Observer Corps

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

for the March 29th meeting at 10AM in the Council Chambers at Kingston City Hall for more info on the League's study of the Golden Hill Center.

If you are interested in joining our study group, call Jacki Moriarty at 331-3418.

Charter Transition

The League has a Charter Transition Committee which meets regularly and is headed by Tom Kadgen and Cindy Bell. This committee monitors meetings on charter transition and reports on them.

On February 6 the County Charter Transition Team presented a program in the Legislative Chambers dealing with the proposed Administrative Code. They have reviewed about nine codes from counties with the charter form of government.

Bea Havranek, First Assistant County Attorney, reviewed the various portions of the code that have been completed so far and answered questions from the audience. Gary Bischoff, Chairman of the Charter Transition Committee, explained the process by which the code and laws would be approved once the charter goes into effect.

While Ulster County's Code is not yet complete, the committee plans to submit portions for public comment and have the code completed by late summer for the legislature to vote on later in the year. All laws will be codified; the administrative code will be available online; and the code and the charter will be arranged so that one can

move easily from one to the other and find material without difficulty.

The Charter Transition Team meeting on February 28 was attended by Benjamin, Bischoff (chairman), Collins, Decker, DeLay (Legislative Office) and Reiter (Deputy County Treasurer).

Meg DeLay reviewed the latest developments of the administrative code: the Departments of Personnel and Social Services. There was discussion as to whether the requirement that the Personnel Director and Social Services Director be residents of UC was a state requirement or was an option for the county. There was also a question as whether it was appropriate under Social Services to allow as much as a month to elapse before having to turn the dollars over to the Commissioner of Finance. It was suggested that such monies should be turned over as soon as practicable, and Bea Havranek will be consulted on both questions.

Inasmuch as the attendance at the previous meeting at which the Administrative Code was reviewed was not considered substantial, the question arose as to how to ensure that all members of the legislature would be kept abreast of future developments to the code. Regular e-mailing to the legislators monthly (with hardcopy to those who do not have access) with information on the code and requests for comments and questions to be sent to the committee would be best. This should be followed by another informational meeting when the code is complete; the subcommittee will probably have finished with its work by June.

Discussion with Adele Reiter (Deputy

County Treasurer) dealt with changes that will need to be made as the Office of County Treasurer is phased out and the Office of Commissioner of Finance comes into being. There will be more of this at the next meeting.

The new auditor is Robert Wenzel, formerly with the NYS Comptroller's Office.

Gary Bischoff reported that the county is continuing to pursue obtaining the \$25,000 that by law NYS is supposed to give to any county for charter transition work.

Lee Cane, Observer Corps

Useful Websites

You can reach our local League website at <http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet>

You can reach the state League at www.lwvny.org and the national League at www.lwvus.org. Each of these websites has a great deal of good information, background, policies, programs, and forms. Try going to them and exploring.

E-Mail or Paper Distribution

The question of electronic distribution for the *Commentator* has been raised before and the newsletter has been available on our website for some time. Both the national and state LWVs are using their websites to store bulky material and are sending e-mail to tell people it exists. Much of their communication is in online form and they provide some printed material only on request. This is certainly the trend for the future.

Recognizing that reading the newsletter from the website is burdensome for some

people, and impossible for others, the Board is investigating the possibility of distributing the newsletter by e-mail to all of our members who can receive it in that form.

There will be a telephone survey to collect accurate e-mail addresses from all our members who have access to e-mail so that we can develop an online distribution list.

There are two reasons for trying to distribute by e-mail. The first is that a number of members have stated a preference for receiving newsletters that way as a matter of convenience and tree-saving and we would like to accommodate them. The second is cost. First-class postage is a significant item in our budget and will continue to be so. Reducing the number of copies we print could also lower printing costs.

A committee has been formed to conduct the survey and to develop an e-mail-friendly format for the *Commentator*. Anyone who is interested in helping or who has ideas for the committee should call Lee Ridgway at 339-4927 or e-mail lwlee@cs.com.

It will always be possible to request a printout even if you receive the newsletter by e-mail, and we will always provide printed copies for members without e-mail. Keeping people informed is our first priority. We would like to do so in the best and most cost-effective way possible.

Fund Drives, Local and Not

Our local league sent a letter to our members in January asking for donations to help support our activities. We received over \$1200 from that drive, and we thank all who contributed.

At about the same time, you probably received requests from the national LWV and the state LWV. Having an organization that operates on three levels is confusing, especially when their finances are somewhat separate.

As a local league, we pay "dues" for each of our local members (called PMPs or per-member-payments) to the national LWV and the state LWV. About 90% of your membership dues are spent on PMPs. These support the publications we get from them, and the lobbying they do, so the money is well-spent but does not leave a lot for local program. That's why we come to you.

All three levels of the League are vital but giving at any level (other than dues) only supports that level, not the other levels. Know who is getting your money.

Observer Corps

We are always anxious to have more people in our Observer Corps and a larger presence at governmental meetings. If you are interested in attending meetings you can find the week's meetings listed in the Monday Daily Freeman. They cover the county and the communities within the county.

Kingston meetings are listed there, but can also be found on the Kingston website www.kingston-ny.gov. The website

<http://www.co.ulster.ny.us> has all the information you need on county activities and documents of interest.

If you are interested in joining the Observer Corps, talk to Margaret Sellers.

Meet Gloria Steinem

A reminder that Gloria Steinem will be in Albany April 2nd to support pay equity for women. There will be a legislative event and a luncheon. See the state LWV website for details, or call the LWV office in Albany

Annual Business Meeting May 13

This year, the annual business meeting will be on May 13th, a pot-luck supper followed by the business meeting. The proposed budget will appear in the next newsletter and be voted on at the meeting. This year, we elect the president, secretary, treasurer and a director to bring us to the eight called for in the new bylaws. Portfolios will be assigned to board members by the board.

The slate is:

Jean McGarry, President, 08-10
Dare Thompson, Treasurer, 08-10
Emilie Hauser, Secretary, 08-09
Renee Sachs, Director 08-10

The meeting will also vote on proposed program for the coming year, and proposals will be in the next issue.

Suggestions for program will be received and discussed at the March 29th general meeting after the update on the nursing home study.

Membership News

If Irene McInnis looks a bit overwhelmed, it's because her daughter is getting married in May, but she is still working hard on League projects.

Len Cane is now much better and is out and about, driving his car and attending meetings as necessary. It's been a long struggle and we are so glad he is better. Best wishes to Len and Lee.

Don't forget the luncheon honoring Elizabeth Askue, Emily Johnson, and Shirley Kobran on June 8th. The state League president, Martha Kennedy, will be there to speak to us and to present their awards.

Peter Schickele will talk about his mother, another great lady of the League. I wonder if he spent time in his childhood doing mailings the way Chris Henning did. Perhaps we'll find out on June 8th.

Invitations will be sent out soon, but you really need to SAVE THE DATE!