



# Commentator

## FEBRUARY 2016

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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<b>2016</b>	Check our online <a href="http://lwvmidhudson.org/calendar.html">calendar</a> ( <a href="http://lwvmidhudson.org/calendar.html">http://lwvmidhudson.org/calendar.html</a> ) for updates.	
<i>Our general meetings are open to all. Family and friends welcome!</i>		
<b>February</b>		
2	1:45 pm	Book Club Meeting Club at Enzo's Pizzeria, Boices Lane, Lake Katrine - <i>The Fifties</i>
9	5:30 PM	LWV Materials Management (Solid Waste) Study Committee at the Main Course Restaurant 175 Main Street New Paltz, NY 12561 (NEW LOCATION) For more info and to confirm, contact Kathy OConnor, (845) 757-2247 or <a href="mailto:occonnor.kraye@gmail.com">occonnor.kraye@gmail.com</a>
11	4:00-6:00 PM	Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's, 167 Apple Hill Rd, Hurley, NY 12443.
15	8:30-9:00 AM	Kingston Community Radio, WGHQ 920 AM LWV On Air. Go to <a href="http://www.mykr.org">http://www.mykr.org</a> to listen on your computer. Call 845-331-9255 to ask a question or make a comment. Topic - Guardians of The Charter
25	4:00 PM	Audit Review
<b>March</b>		
1	---	Student Registrations for Students Inside Albany Due
1	1:45 pm	Book Club Meeting Club at Enzo's Pizzeria, Boices Lane, Lake Katrine
18	Fri. 12 Noon	Naturalization Ceremony, Ulster County Court House, 285 Wall St., Kingston Volunteers should arrive at 10:45
TBA	TBA	General Meeting – New York State Constitution
<b>May</b>		
TBA		May Day Party
TBA		Annual Meeting
22-25		Students Inside Albany

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## Prez Sez

About 8 years ago, while visiting the Netherlands, an anti-immigrant, anti-Islam politician, Geert Wilders, was all the rage. His rather flamboyant tanned face topped by platinum hair was all over the newspapers together with his outrageous and inflammatory remarks. I felt sorry for the people of the Netherlands and rather superior since we had just elected Barak Obama to be the President of the United States of America.



Now, in our Republican Primary race, Americans have their own Geert Wilders, Donald Trump. They even look alike (a little). Trump is spouting similar anti-Islamic immigration rhetoric, while Geert is experiencing a surge in popularity as the Dutch cope with the influx of Syrian refugees.

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises (see <http://lwv.org/content/immigration> for the complete position statement). The League also supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

As an emigrant/immigrant myself, first from the Netherlands to New Zealand at age 9, and then at age 22 to the United States, I personally would love to see us go back to pre-1921 when the United States had essentially open borders. We are such a marvelous mix of people, from so many backgrounds, marrying each other and creating ever more interesting combinations. Whenever I come back from my travels to the Netherlands I feel the optimism, enthusiasm and can-do spirit that permeates the American air, and that I attribute to our open society. Let's keep it that way by embracing those who are here and those who are on their way with open arms.

Jolanda Jansen

Monthly Board meeting minutes and more can be found at: <http://lwvmidhudson.org/Committees.html>

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Our own Sarah Womer is featured on page 33 of the current (January) **Hudson Valley** magazine. She covers the **WHOLE** page!. It's in a section called "*People to Watch, 9 Movers and Shakers*". Her story is called "*Talkin' Trash*" with sub-headline "*This Beacon resident takes on waste over the long haul,*" The article can be read online at

[www.hvmag.com/Hudson-Valley-Magazine/January-2016/People-to-Watch/Sarah-Womer/](http://www.hvmag.com/Hudson-Valley-Magazine/January-2016/People-to-Watch/Sarah-Womer/)

For many more interesting stories of our region, you might want to pick up your own copy of the magazine... or subscribe?

Have you got a story about a member's special contributions to our common good? Send us a story and we'll happily publish it. Our readers would love to read 'em.

## VOTER SERVICE

### Moderating Guidelines

*Guidelines for moderating and sponsorship of candidates' events by the League are on our website at <http://lwvmidhudson.org/Moderating.html> or from the [Home](#) page and the [Elections](#) page.*

## What Voter Service has done and What We're Doing

On January 12, one of the contestants on the game show, Jeopardy, was asked this question by host Alex Trebek:

"I understand you are active in the League of Women Voters. We don't seem to see them moderate presidential debates anymore as they did in the past. Why is that?"

"Sadly, about 20 years ago, the candidates started to make too many demands that the league felt could not be met. It was important to remain autonomous and so we ended our role as moderator."

It is indeed sad that campaigns have become so focused on money, influence, personalities, and posturing. As league members, we must continue fighting for a more democratic process that levels the playing field for all qualified candidates.

## STUDY AND ADVOCACY

### Book Club

Our next book is *The Fifties* by David Halberstam. It's wonderful but don't drop it on your cat. We're dividing it up into sections for taking a more reasonable bite out of its 800 plus pages.

There are several books about inequality reviewed in the December 30th Times Book Review. Here are the writings of two who believe that inequality is not really the issue.

Categorized as "idiosyncratic" is Harry G. Frankfurt's *On Inequality*. His thesis is that poverty is the problem, not the fact that others are rich (or richer than me...). A quick read at 120 pages and available for less than \$10.00. He also wrote a really, really short best seller, *On Bullshit* (67 pages).

*The Inequality Trap: Fighting Capitalism Instead of Poverty* by William Watson was reviewed in the Times. The reviewer said: "Today's preoccupation with economic inequality, Watson writes, breeds unhealthy skepticism about capitalism and shifts our focus away from the issue of poverty..." (32.95)

Other possibilities were discussed at the last book club meeting:

*Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time* by Dava Sobel. Daisy and I have read and liked it. A reviewer noted Sobel's "remarkable ability to tell a story with clarity and perfect pacing" (192 pages).

*Common Sense*, the pamphlet written by Thomas Paine in 1775 that some say inspired the American revolt against England. History as written then... (104 pages)

Steven Johnson has written several books on innovation but *How We Got to Now* is my first and won't be the last. I loved it, especially the chapters about the history and value of – cold! (225 pages).

And don't forget *The Big Short!* The movie was great. They managed to turn a really disheartening story into dark hilarity. I got the book the next day and flew through it (even though Michael Lewis, while a good, smooth writer is no comic). (320 pages)

We discussed more than I've written about and we'll be deciding on our reading program at our next meeting, February 2nd (Groundhog Day), 1:45, Enzo's Restaurant, 207 Boices Lane.

## ULSTER COUNTY OBSERVER CORP

Schedules, Audio recordings, agenda and minutes of Legislative Committee meetings and other information can be found at <http://ulstercountyny.gov/legislature>

### Become A Member Of Our Observer Corps

Get to know your local government in a personal way! Strengthen local democracy by adding "sunlight" to the legislative process and publishing what you observe in our Commentator! You may observe your town or city board meetings you prefer. *We will guide you, so you do not need to be an expert to get started.* Call Margaret Sellers at 339-3180 with your questions.

### Materials Management Committee

Monthly committee minutes can be found at: [http://lwvmidhudson.org/Action\\_Study.html#Trash](http://lwvmidhudson.org/Action_Study.html#Trash)

The January meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. Remember what snow looked like?

## Hudson River Valley Greenway Board Meeting

The January 14 meeting of the Hudson River Valley Greenway board covered a wide range of material. Many folks were in attendance that day including Assembly member Didi Barrett, who mentioned the pressure for development in this region on farmlands. David Behm of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets began the meeting with a presentation on the department's Hudson Valley Agricultural Enhancement Program, which works to support local agriculture through farmland-protection grants. It was mentioned that those who leased farm land needed the most protection.

The meeting then proceeded with a discussion of Greenway Conservancy efforts, including the work to close gaps in the trail route from New York City to the Capital District and to increase the visibility of the Hudson River water trail. Following this, representatives from the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area discussed a variety of ongoing projects. These included plans to replant the Roosevelt vegetable garden, develop new historical trails, issue a new guidebook, and begin planning the 2016 Hudson River Valley Ramble.

In addition, the Greenways Communities Council issued three new Greenways Grants, including one to the Town of Saugerties for a feasibility study of improving access to Bristol Beach State Park.

Soyal Smalls and Kristen Faughnen

## Energy and Environment Committee

January 21, 2016, 6:03-7:25 PM

Committee Members: Richard A. Parete, Chairman, Tracey A. Bartels, Deputy Chairman, Jonathan Heppner, Ron G. Lapp, Jr., Mary Wawro

Other Legislators: Manna Jo Greene, John Parete

Richard Parete called the meeting to order.

Minutes from the December 9, 2015 meeting were approved.

### Guest Presentation:

#### Resource Recovery Agency Report – Tim Rose, Executive Director:

2015 was a good year. Reserves are at \$1.8M, 15% which is OK. Two board member positions, Leon Smith and Dominic Tagliaferro, are open for appointment at the Feb. meeting. Interviews by the Legislature are expected.

Commodity prices are low (re China slowdown) causing Single-Stream to be costing money (about \$135,000 per year). Not considered to be a big problem unless the commodities could not be disposed of. Legislator Jonathan Heppner asked what is the outlook and timeline: not clear at this time.

The new boxes ordered are local sourced.

Legislator Tracy Bartels suggested a tour in the spring: Agreed.

### Resolutions for January 26, 2016:

#### Resolution No. 20 –

Authorizing The Chairman Of The Ulster County Legislature To Execute An Agreement With The New York State Department Of Environmental Conservation (DEC) To Accept Grant Funds, For A Comprehensive Culvert Assessment, And Amending The 2016 Ulster County Budget – Department Of The Environment: Approved following a concern about how sponsors are named.

#### Resolution No. 45 -

Adopting And Issuing A Negative Declaration Under 6 NYCRR Part 617 State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) By The Ulster County Legislature For The Construction of Hudson Valley Rail Trail West: Phase 4 - Capital Project No. 451 – Department Of Planning: Approved following a discussion by Dennis Doyle, Director of Planning.

#### Motion: Resolution No. 79 -

Establishing the Ulster County Waterways Advisory Committee: Approved following a discussion with Legislator John Parete.

**Old Business:**

Microbeads: Legislator Bartles said the proposed local law is in limbo and that proposed federal legislation is pending. Legislators and local activists are monitoring the situation and will report later.

Climate Smart Committee – Brief Update: Legislator Manna Jo Greene announced a Kick Off event.

Solid Waste Disposal Improvement Commission – Brief Update: Legislator Tracey Bartles gave an overview for the new committee members. A report from the commission is expected in Mar.

**Confirming Date/Time for Future Committee Meetings:**

Second Tuesday at 6:00 PM following the Legislative Program Committee meeting at SUNY Ulster.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer Corps, 1-22-16

**January 19, 2016, 6:30 – 7:22 PM**

Committee Members: **James F. Maloney, Chairman, Hector Rodriquez, Deputy Chairman, Ron G. Lapp, Jr., Herbert Litts III (absent), Mary Beth Maio (absent), Jennifer Schwartz Berky, James Delaune**

Meeting called to Order by Chairman Maloney and he welcomed the new members to the committee and recognized Legislator Hector Rodriquez as Deputy Chairman.

The minutes of the December 1, 2015 meeting were approved.

**Resolutions for January 26, 2016 Regular Legislative Session:**

Resolutions pertaining to the Department of Tourism, Department of Planning, Department of Information Services, and the Ulster County Planning Board were approved. Resolutions pertaining to the Department of Tourism and the Department of Planning were postponed.

**Old Business:**

Ulster County Broadband Plan Update - Chris White, Deputy Director, Planning, that the previously discussed study is on hold as there has been an announced merger of Time Warner Cable and Charter (called New Charter) and an announced plan from Governor Cuomo of a state-wide broadband plan. As those plans are developed and reviewed by the county, the county government will advocate for an "all wired with adequate capacity" goal for all households and businesses. Legislator Ron Lapp, Jr. is concerned that any households and businesses will be underserved. Mr. White assured him and the committee there is a county commitment of that goal and to universal service.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer Corps, 1-22-16

**Economic  
Development,  
Tourism, Housing,  
Planning & Transit  
Committee**

**UC Board of  
Health**

The Board met on January 11, 2016. Since there was no quorum, those present listened to reports that were presented and discussed any related date. No votes were taken. Those present met from 6:35 until 7:08.

Present: Woodley, Cardinale, Hildebrandt

Others: Dr. Carol Smith, Commissioner of Health and Mental Health Department, Katrina Kouhout, Secretary to the Commissioner

Absent: Kelly, Graham, Delmar, Tack

The minutes of the December, 2015 meeting will be voted on at the next meeting of the Board.

The public hearing on the Sanitary Code will be held in March, 2016. The exact date will be provided at a later time.

Under what was referred to as New Business on the agenda there were two parts:

- a. The Commissioner's Report
- b. The medical examiner's report

The Commissioner's Report: Note: Only updates were reported by the Commissioner. There were five items that Dr. Smith reported on:

1. Tobacco Retail Licenses: this is being handled

2. Winchell's Pizza Hearing: This business is located in the T/Olive. As a result of the various violations, the owner will be called to a hearing to address these violations on January 27, 2016. Apparently the business is still open and operating. However, the notices covering the various violations and fines have been posted on each of the 5 entrances. Further, that customers must be provided bottled water is also a posted notice. The owner will be given his day in court.

3. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Culture of Health Prize: Works to implement good health projects locally. This is a \$25,000 prize that the local Department of Health has submitted a grant proposal for consideration. There are 8 areas nation-wide and apparently there were 400 applicants in the first grouping. The grant application that was submitted by the local Department of Health referenced what has been accomplished during Michael Hein's tenure in office. The local application passed the first elimination level and is one of 44 to be considered for the next elimination period and possibly for the final.

4. Bed Bugs: A constant issue. Not unique to Ulster County. Such do not communicate communicable diseases to humans. The UC Health Department has put a publication from the NYC Health Department dealing with the problem and how to deal with on its local web site. There are no dollars available to use to eradicate this problem. The local Health Department can provide education as to how best to handle the problem and it does.

5. The Opioid Issue: Admittedly this is a problem which continues to grow. The Health Department has distributed special kits to be used for training purposes. In order to provide help in dealing with this ever growing problem, the Health Department has agreed to participate in a panel which is to be held at the SUNY UCCC Kingston campus. Apparently, to further help in handling the drug cases, the services of an epidemiologist is needed. ...Dutchess County employs one. The principal work would be handling the toxicology report work. Strategies to deal with the problem primarily educating the public on what to do.

The second portion dealt with the medical examiner's report. This report was prepared showing a comparison between 2014 and 2015 on a month by month basis.

Overall there were 388 calls in 2015 v. 319 in 2014; 46 site visits in 2015 v. 38 in 2014; 146 autopsies in 2015 v. 93 in 2014; 23 suicides in 2015 v. 22 in 2014; 4 motor vehicles situations in 2015 v. 5 in 2014; no homicides in 2015 v. 2 in 2014.

It was noted during the discussion that the dollars allocated to support the medical examiner's program are all county dollars. There is no state money received to cover any of its expenses.

Note: It should be noted that Marianne Hildebrandt had agreed to accept the nomination to the position of secretary of the Board when advised of her nomination in December.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

## **UC Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors**

The January 19, 2016 meeting of the Association was convened at 8:30 by President, T/Supervisor Carl Chipman and adjourned at 10:13.

Supervisors from T/Denning, Gardiner, Hardenburgh, Marbletown, Marlboro, New Paltz, Plattekill, Rochester, Rosendale, Shandaken, Shawangunk, Wawarsing, and Mayor of City of Kingston were present.

Following the call to order, the first item on the agenda was the introduction of each person present, both supervisors and mayors as well as non-members who were present.

The next item was the election of officers for 2016. Those who served during 2015 were re-elected to the same positions for the 2016 year: President: Carl Chipman; Vice-President: Joseph Croce;

Vice-President: Michael Warren; Treasurer: James Quigley; and Secretary: Jeanne Walsh.

Jennifer Metzger, a member of the T/Rosendale Board was introduced by Mr. Chipman. She gave an update on what the T/Rosendale and 29 other groups are doing with regards to the Pilgrim Pipeline Project. This project involves the proposed construction of a pipeline to run along the NYS Thruway from New Jersey to Albany carrying oil. Apparently the group mentioned above has written to the DEC as a result of concern over which agency would be the lead agency in dealing with this project or could it be a joint effort with the Thruway Authority. As matters now stand the Commissioner of the DEC must determine who will be the lead agency. T/New Paltz Supervisor Neil Bettez advised that a meeting in New Paltz or Rosendale to discuss this further with the idea of preventing a united front.

Mr. Chipman then introduced Michael Berg, Executive Director of Family of Woodstock who spoke about Food for the Needy. He noted that during growing season the various food pantries in Ulster County receive thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables. However, the pantries have limited facilities to handle any food needing refrigeration. To handle the food and serve those needing such effectively, Mr. Berg indicated that 6 "hubs" would be established around Ulster County:

- T/Rosendale & T/Marbletown would have a joint operation;
- People's Place: the largest food pantry in Ulster County. He noted that the building in which it is located was a market at one time. Apparently the refrigeration units located in the basement are still operational;
- Ellenville;
- John Parete has offered the refrigeration units at his bar;
- Liberty View Farms in Highland; and
- the 6th one is being developed.

Additionally, he said that Family wished to establish areas throughout UC to be better able to deal with emergency situations: developing community food program to be available in times of disaster/emergencies is what he noted was the idea. Mr. Berg noted that he had spoken with Dr. Smith, Commissioner of Health and Mental Health. She has indicated that she would waive the \$300 licensing fee on any kitchen to be considered for use to help with the food program, but will not waive any of the requirements needed to approve licensing a kitchen like one located in a church for example.

Mr. Berg then introduced Diane Muller from the Red Cross. Ms. Muller directed her comments to the general topic of shelters in UC:

- there are a number located in UC;
- there are a limited number of volunteers to work in the shelters;
- have 5-6 teams of volunteers available trained in sheltering work;
- Red Cross provides supervisors to be in these shelters with the teams;
- the areas that the Red Cross covers runs from Ulster and Dutchess Counties north to the Canadian border including St. Lawrence County.
- the Red Cross is seeking volunteers, and performs background checks and provides training for those who volunteer to work with the Red Cross.

The next item on the agenda was Air BnB. UC Comptroller Elliot Auerbach was introduced and he explained what the status of this group was at present.

- legitimate hotels recognize the value of BnB (bed and breakfast) facilities when hotels are over booked;
- there are hundreds of BnB through-out UC;
- there is a bed tax of 2% which the hotels pay to UC; but the BnB are part of this arrangement, so the tax is not paid by the BnBs.
- there is a concern about what the zoning codes in the various towns may be and are such being followed;



-insurance: what happens if there is a problem: do BnBs have such insurance?

Additionally the town consideration refers to "CO", certificate of occupancy. What is being done to ensure that the properties used under AirBnB are maintained according to the law developed to avoid problems of safety situations.

Mr. Auerbach introduced his deputy, Evan Gallo, who explained about Air BnB:

In 2015 58,000 people visited UC covering over 1300 properties. Apparently discussion has been initiated with AirBnB: it is a corporate group with a website that it operates. Among other things UC wants to get the bed tax money from this group.

There was general discussion about various items, among other things obtaining better service from Time-Warner (this has been worked on for some years).

Mr. Chipman noted that the group did not usually meet in February; however, his concern about the group having the time to be able to respond to any budget matters caused him to feel that the group should meet in February and suggested it meet on the 23rd. The group was in agreement and voted accordingly.

The minutes of the December meeting were approved.

The Treasurer's report will be addressed in February when Mr. Quigley has returned from vacation.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

**In case you've forgotten what winter is *supposed* to look like around here.**