



Commentator

OCTOBER 2011

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.

President:
 Dare Thompson
darethompson@gmail.com
 (845) 236-3074

Newsletter:
 Jim McGarry
lwvmhr@hvc.rr.com
 845-336-0304

Membership:
 Betty Chin
Blc2003@hotmail.com
 845-331-2572

CALENDAR		
2011		
SEPTEMBER		
19	Wed 5-7 pm	"Hot Topics" Dutch treat cocktails and free treats, 11 Main Street Bistro, Kingston. "Why is this election so important?"
25	Tue 5:30 pm	Solid Waste Study Committee, Gateway Diner, Highland (near Mid-Hudson Bridge)
27	Thu 5-7 pm	Dutchess County Executive candidate forum moderated by LWV's Ellie Charwat. Sponsored by Dutchess Co. Coalition of Nonprofit Execs, Locust Grove, 2683 South Rd, POK. Free, but register at 845-454-5062.
29	Sat 10-1	Kingston Mayor candidate forum; UC District Attorney candidate forum, City Hall, Broadway, Kingston.
NOVEMBER		
1	Tue 7 pm	Dutchess Family Court Judge candidate forum with County Executive candidates "drop-in". Sponsored by LWVMHR & Dutchess AAUW at POK Friends Meeting, 249 Hooker Ave.
2	Wed 7:15 pm	Board Meeting at Lee Ridgway, 19 Johnston Ave Kingston
8	Tue 6am-9pm	ELECTION DAY
14	Mon 7:30 am	Thank you breakfast for all county-wide candidates and retiring county elected officials, Deisings on Front St., Kingston. By invitation.
16	Wed 3-6 pm	Conference on Solid Waste Management in Dutchess and Ulster Counties, SUNY New Paltz, Student Union. Free
22	Tue 5 pm	Solid Waste Study Committee, Gateway Diner, Highland (near Mid-Hudson Bridge)
DECEMBER		
7	Wed 5-7 pm	"Hot Topics" Dutch treat cocktails and free treats, Hoffman House, Kingston. Topic TBA.

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 Dare Thompson, 236-3074 or darethompson@gmail.com

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

Prez Sez...

How can it be mid-October already? Time flies, and the League has pots bubbling away on all burners and a few items warming in the oven.

Of course on a front burner is **Voter Service** and we hope to see you at our candidate debates. And do bring friends! There are several key races on both sides of the river in which no incumbents are running, and in Ulster County we are watching new county legislative districts shake out, so there is a lot of change in the works. Some of us will be gathering on October 19 to talk among ourselves about why this election is important, and we hope you'll also take advantage of this first-ever "Hot Topic" event. (See the separate article on this.)

Also bubbling actively is the **Golden Hill Health Care Center** controversy in Ulster Co. We've been one of the lone public voices in support of the county selling the nursing home, and we've been saying "Do it SOON!" for over a year now, so we're delighted that the County Exec's 2012 Budget, just released, is applying pressure to the Legislature to do so. We'll continue to speak out on this as an organization, and we encourage you to do so as individuals. The longer the county drags its feet on this, the fewer options it will have. There is a lot of information on our website on Golden Hill if you need details.

Also in Ulster we're watching the **Charter Revision Commission**. LWV members Tom Kadgen, Cynthia Lowe, and Jim McGarry are serving on it, with Cynthia as chair, so we're hopeful that the citizens will be well-served by any changes made.

Meanwhile a large committee of members from Dutchess and Ulster is energetically planning a **solid waste conference on November 16** from 3 to 6 pm at SUNY New Paltz. It's challenging to create a 3-hour basic introduction to the issues of solid waste management, but they're doing a great job and attracting new League members as they go. The Resource Recovery Agencies in both counties are facing debts, deficits and deadlines. Come learn why and, more importantly, how we do better in the future. Look in this Commentator and our website for more details.

And a **Dutchess Shared Services** study committee, chaired by Ellie Charwat, is really gaining traction and welcomes new members. At the last meeting we were really startled by some budget numbers relating to fire districts, particularly the ambulance services some districts offer (for a pretty penny). We also talked about economic development, town budget pie charts, and other topics individuals are very thoughtfully researching. Let Ellie know if you're interested (echarwat@yahoo.com). Our **Ulster Shared Services** committee has been quiet due to health issues but should reactivate soon.

Dutchess County redistricting is also a concern but all is quiet at the moment. Let me know if you want to be alerted when things start moving.

So happy election season everyone. It's a great time to be active in the League!

Dare**PROGRAM NEWS**

"Why Is This Election Important?" a discussion on **Wed., October 19, 5 – 7 pm** at **11 Main Street Bistro, Kingston**. Free and open to all. Cash bar.

Registered voters often skip "off-year" elections, thinking that their main job is to decide who should represent them in the federal government. What they may not realize is that their votes have much more impact locally – as the recent mayoral primary in Kingston showed, with both Democrats and Republicans having to wait for the absentee ballots to be counted before knowing who their candidates would be.

So what are the issues that voters should be considering in the November 8 election? League members and others will gather at 11 Main Street Bistro in Kingston on Wednesday, October 19, from 5 – 7 pm to share their concerns and hear what's on the minds of others in the county who are wondering how to evaluate the candidates for county, town and city government positions.

Candidates will neither be endorsed nor disparaged. The discussion will focus on the issues that voters feel the candidates should be considering and why it is important for people to get out and vote even when there are no "big names" on the ballot.

This is the first in a series of "hot topics" gatherings that the League will hold during the coming year in Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

**VOTER
SERVICE**

Election time is a busy season for Voter Services. Among the several services we're providing are:
Voter Registration:

- Clinton Methodist Church on 10/11 and 10/12.
- Ellenville on October 14.

Candidates' forums:

- 10/17 Town of Saugerties Legislative Districts, 6:30 - 8:00
- 10/20 Town of Saugerties, County DA
- 10/22 Town of Olive Supervisor 10:00
- 10/22 Town of Shandaken Supervisor
- 10/27 Dutchess Executive
- 10/29 City of Kingston Mayor, DA
- 11/01 Dutchess Family Court Judges (with AAUW)
- 11/04 Rosendale Town Supervisor

MANY THANKS to Cindy Bell, Jean McGarry, Lee Ridgway, Dare Thompson, Emilie Hauser, Ellie Charwat, and Chris Henning. We're always looking for members to help on this all important service. Contact Cindy Bell cbell1000@aol.com 336-5763 or Jean McGarry jfmcg@hvc.rr.com 336-6622 for more information.

Dutchess County Executive

CANDIDATE FORUM

Dan French (D) Marc Molinaro (R)

Thursday, October 27th
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

at

Locust Grove
2683 South Road, Poughkeepsie

Eleanor Charwat, LWV, Moderator

*Sponsored by
Dutchess County Coalition of Nonprofits*

Special thanks to the League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region and Vassar College's Democratic Engagement Capstone Students and Professor Gregory.

Dutchess County Family Court Judge

CANDIDATE FORUM

Marco Caviglia (D) Denise Watson (R)
*With a "drop-by" from county executive candidates
 Dan French and Marc Molinaro*

Tuesday, November 1
7:00 PM

at

Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting House
249 Hooker Avenue, Poughkeepsie

*Sponsored by
League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region and Poughkeepsie Branch AAUW, Inc.*

Ulster County CANDIDATE FORUM

Saturday, October 29

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

at

**Kingston City Hall
420 Broadway**

Jean McGarry, LWV, Moderator

**Kingston Mayor
10 – 11:15**

**District Attorney
11:30 – 12:30**

Co-sponsored by AAUW Kingston

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORTS – SHARED SERVICES

Dutchess County Shared Services Study

General Links of interest:

The Shared Services Program within the NYS Department of State Division of Local Government Services
<http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/sharedservices/index.html>

Best Practices page of the NYS Association of Counties. www.nysac.org/County_Corner.php/

Notes from Shared Services Committee (Dutchess) Meeting - October 11, 2011

Present: Ellie Charwat, Anne Conroy, Nan Fogel, Diane Jablonski, Suzi and Herb Stoller, Dare Thompson

Report on Pattern for Progress Conference on Tax Cap – Ellie and Nan; followup: Ellie to do a fact sheet on Tax Cap; Diane to do pie charts on La Grange and Wappingers expenditures for 2009 from State Comptroller's Office; both will be sent to those town supervisors (Jon Wagner and Barbara Gutzler) to share with their constituents at budget hearings (Note: mailed on October 14)

Economic Development agencies – Anne gave a report and a chart listing seven local and state agencies, private and public, that deal with economic development. She saw little possibility for sharing services in this area since each is funded differently and has a different mandate.

Fire District Emergency Medical Service – Herb a chart comparing data on budget, tax base, tax rate, population, tax base/person, expense/person and whether the fire district offers basic or advance life support services for the Town of Poughkeepsie, Town of Wappinger, Town of LaGrange and East Fishkill. Costs per person vary tremendously from \$41 in New Hackensack and New Hamburg where ambulance services are contracted out to \$412 in Arlington and LaGrange. He concluded there are too many resources and personnel for the area/population served and fire districts can't bill insurance companies for service to insured clients, whereas private companies can. The Arlington Fire District employs 55 people just for EMS.

Arlington Fire District is having a budget hearing on Tuesday, Oct 18 at 6 pm at the Red Oaks Mill Firehouse. We urge people to attend to protest the 24 percent proposed increase for fire services. Questions to ask: How much of the budget is for fire and how much for EMS? How many fires did the AFD respond to last year? How many EMS calls? How many personnel – full and part time?

Followup – with Poughkeepsie Town Board – why not look into contracting out emergency medical services to a private company as they did before 1990?

With State Legislators – pass a law requiring a public vote on the fire district budget just as with school budget. Contact Mary Beth Pfeiffer at the Poughkeepsie Journal for more exposure to this issue and share Herb's chart with her.

Health Insurance Consortium – Suzi reported on the Dutchess Independent Health Insurance Consortium that includes 28 school districts with more than 10,000 contracts. The consortium partially administers and negotiates better benefits, monitors services and responsiveness and acquires health insurance at significantly less cost than an individual district could. It has its own bylaws, lawyers and support staff. Suzi will follow up with Bruce Martin to see if municipalities could join the consortium, since town supervisors were interested in shared health insurance services.

Ulster County Shared Services Study

County/City of Poughkeepsie Bus System - Anne reported that County Commissioner of Planning Kelly Saloman thought there was a good chance of sharing bus service with the county and the city, if the city were to request a study of such consolidation.

Next meeting: Wed Nov 16 at 11 am at Ellie's house.

DOCUMENTS ONLINE: <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/municipal.html>.

- [Ulster Intergovernmental Summary Report](#)
- [Economic Study](#)
- [Judicial Study](#)
- [Highway Study](#)
- [Action Plan](#)

Additional links of interest include

- The Draft Report can be found on the County Website at www.co.ulster.ny.us/municipalities/FINAL%20DRAFT%20Highway%20DOC%20with%20charts%20and%20maps.pdf
- Frank Cassetta's concise summary is at our website at lwvmidhudson.org/files/Highway_Service_Cooperation_-_Summary.pdf

League of Women Voters Mid-Hudson Region

presents

SOLID WASTE:

A Conference for County and Municipal Leaders and Concerned Citizens
How will Dutchess and Ulster Counties deal with waste in future decades?
What's required?
What are the options?

Wednesday, November 16, 3 – 6 pm

at

SUNY New Paltz Student Union

REGISTER at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LWVSolidWaste>

Co-Sponsor:

SUNY's CRREO (Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach)

Endorsers:

Dutchess Co. Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors,
Ulster Co. Association of Town Supervisors, Pattern for Progress

With funding support from

Mid-Hudson Geosciences and Jansen Engineering, PLLC

Other support:

AAUW Kingston, Hudson Valley Smart Growth Alliance,
Hudson Valley Regional Council, Vassar Greens

LWV GHHCC Study Group 2

On October 19th 2010 the League presented its
Consensus Report
to the Ulster County Legislature.

- **Summary:** http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_Consensus_Summary.pdf
- **Statement:** http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_Consensus_Statement.pdf
- **Pros & Cons:** http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_Study-Pros_and_Cons_10-19-10.pdf

Below are the 2010 and 2008 materials and resources used by the League in formulating its consensus. We recommend you study them.

Local News Coverage of interest

The Daily Freeman 10/21/10
<http://www.dailyfreeman.com/articles/2010/10/21/news/doc4cbfc5e8c81e5966393510.txt?viewmode=fullstory>

The Times Herald-Record 10/20/10
<http://www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101020/NEWS/10200343>

NOTE: Because of the vast amount of material under consideration, reports and resources on this topic are now only available online at http://lwvmidhudson.org/Action_Study.html. We'll include a brief statement of the materials available and any links you'll need to access them. For printed copy, please contact one of the league officers noted above.

LWVMHR STUDY GROUP:

1. Golden Hill Health Care Center: A LWVMHR Study
at http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_-_A_LWVMHR_Study.pdf
2. LWVMHR Study Group meeting on July 16, 2010
at http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_-_Study_Group_7-26-10.pdf
3. Interviews about GHHC Marshall Beckman, Deputy County Executive of Ulster County
at http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_LWVMHR_Study_-_Beckman_Interview.pdf

ULSTER COUNTY TASK FORCE:

1. Observer Corp: Golden Hill Task Force Committee Meetings 6/1/10-8/3/10
at http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/GHHC_Task_Force_Meetings-6-1-10_to_8-3-10.pdf
2. Long Term Care Financial Considerations: Golden Hill Health Care Center; David Bonk, CMA, CISA
at http://lwvmidhudson.org/files/Golden_Hill_Financial_Considerations_2010.pdf
3. GOLDEN HILL SPECIAL TASK FORCE PRESENTATION TO THE LEGISLATURE November 30, 2010: The presentation video and full report can be viewed at
<http://www.totalwebcasting.com/view/?id=ulster#>

Further items will be posted online at http://lwvmidhudson.org/Action_Study.html as they are available.

Additional links of interest:

NYS Department of Health - [Nursing Homes in New York State](http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/nursing/) at
<http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/nursing/>

Resolution No. 115 at <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/resolutions/115-10.pdf> adopted on April 20, 2010 creating the Golden Hill Task Force.

Information on the May 25th summit on county-run nursing homes hosted by Ulster County reported in the Daily Freeman May 13th issue at
<http://www.freemanonline.com/articles/2010/05/13/news/doc4beb815d9e160368704114.txt>

**ULSTER
COUNTY
OBSERVER
CORP**

**Ulster County
Legislature
Meeting**

The Legislature met in regular session on September 21st at 7:00 PM. Legislators absent included: Frey, Gerentine, Petit, and Stoekeler.

Some 14 speakers spoke during the Public Comment period for about 50 minutes with nearly all speaking on behalf of retaining ownership of Golden Hill. Our president, Dare Thompson, reiterated the League's position.

The agenda included the usual array of contract approvals and budget adjustments. One item in this category of continuing interest pertains to an otherwise routine contract approval.

Readers will recall from prior reports that the Legislature has been trying to get copies of investigations conducted by NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse regarding the homicide and assault which took place at the Renaissance Project, Ellenville, NY, on October 6, 2010. It continues to be unsuccessful. The latest attempt is a formal resolution requesting cooperation. So far the funding approval has been withheld. It pertains to "Alternatives To Incarceration" services.

Although referred back to committee, the agenda included a resolution establishing a policy that various scrap metals be sold to a recycler and charges the Department of Public Works to develop a tracking system and disposition procedures. (NOTE: as of 10/17 the agenda for 10/18 does not include a similar

resolution)

For about an hour the legislators debated a resolution to state:

RESOLVED, it shall be the policy of the Ulster County Legislature to continue operating Golden Hill Health Care Center as a function of county government, and be it further

RESOLVED, this policy affirms that all 280 licensed beds remain within the County of Ulster's ownership and operation and shall remain consistent with ARTICLE XXIX (Department of Residential Health Care Facilities) of the Ulster County Charter,

Several legislators spoke at length of their position... some more than once. Although the matter was defeated 15-14 some voting no based their vote more on the inadequacy of the legislation than of the substance of the resolution. Those voting to approve the resolution included: Aiello, Belfiglio, Donaldson, Fabiano, Felicello, Loughran, Madsen, Maloney, Rich Parete, Robert Parete, Provenzano, Rodriguez, Wadnola, and Zimet. Those against included: Bernardo, Briggs, Gregorius, Hansut, Harris, Hayes, Hochberg, Lomita, Roberts, Ronk, Shapiro, Sheeley, Sweeney, Terpening, and Terrizzi.

A draft resolution is posted on the on-line agenda of the legislature which appears to address some of the objections legislators raised.

Jim McGarry

**Ulster County
Legislature:
Governmental
Services,
Environmental
&
Administrative
Committee**

Date: September 19, 2011

Start Time: 6:01 p.m.

Finish Time: 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Kevin Roberts called the meeting to order.

Leon Smith, Chair of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency board, discussed he had met with Taylor (recycling) and they requested a meeting with the UCRRA. Mr. Roberts requested a meeting with the committee that is to be held next week at 5:30 p.m. between meetings.

The UCRRA is deferring payments from the UC towns related to Tropical Storms Irene and Lee, and is sharing costs and equipment with the towns, and requested additional tonnage of the DEC.

A resolution regarding cooperation from the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse passed. A resolution regarding ferrous and non-ferrous metals policy passed.

A resolution regarding establishing a capital project for reconstruction and improvements necessitated by Tropical Storm Irene and prevent damage – FEMA - Department of Public Works passed.

A resolution authorizing the reconstruction of roads, etc at a maximum estimated cost of \$15,000,000 and authorizing the issuance of \$15,000,000 bonds passed.

A resolution authorizing the chairman of the UC legislature to execute an application to receive funds from the NYS Office for the Aging for NY Connects passed.

Mr. Roberts opened the meeting to public comment: Emilie Hauser, league member, commented on the language used in the metals policy resolution and suggested perfecting language on the terms used and suggested a reporting schedule. Also, she suggested a policy from the UCRRA on purchasing and an overall policy on equipment.

Document prepared by Vic Melville, 10/16/11

Special Board Meeting - Hearing for municipalities on 2012 budget:

Date: October 13, 2011 Start Time: 4:32 Finish Time: 4:33 p.m.

Representatives of the UC towns were invited to comment on tipping fees for the towns. No representatives of the towns were present for comment.

UCRRA Regular Board Meeting:

Start Time: 4:32 p.m. Finish Time: 4:40 p.m.

Leon Smith, Chair of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency board, presented a new revised 2012 budget (10/13/11) that reflected the financial effect by the increase in tonnage received as a result of Tropical Storms Irene and Lee. The increase resulted in adjusting the Net Service Fee (\$1,382,894 in the 2011 budget) from an increase of \$229,000 to a decrease of \$16,741 from last year and allows for employment changes including hiring an assistant director for operations and safety.

A resolution to adopt the new revised budget passed.

Document prepared by Vic Melville, 10/16/11