



League of Women Voters of Smithtown Township

VOTER

The LWV is a non-partisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

January 2007

website: <http://www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org/smithtown.htm>

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- Government Action Program
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All Smithtown LWV members are invited to a
2007 Program Planning Meeting
 to be held at the Mills Pond House on
 Thursday, **February 1, 2007** at noon.

Further details on page 3...

Happy New Year!

Wednesday, January 17, 2007 at 7pm
 The Smithtown Library, Main Branch

Robert D. Cess
Distinguished Professor
and Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus,
Marine Sciences Research Center
State University of New York, Stony Brook

Global warming:
What we know and what we don't know

An overview will be presented as to how the population of this planet is changing the composition of the Earth's atmosphere, and how this compositional change will lead to global warming. Although computer simulations of climate change are, at present, of limited utility, there is growing evidence that global warming is occurring. For example, there is a loss of glacial ice in several regions of the globe in addition to rise in sea level. But considerable uncertainty exists as to the actual consequences of a future warmer Earth.

All are invited to this informative presentation.

President's Message

I hope all of you feel, with me, that the new year brings a renewed sense of dedication to whatever challenges and inspires you. We are in the midst of detailed preparation for the LeaderSpark Program the League is planning to offer to Smithtown youth. Opportunity for participation is flexible and varied. Please let me know if you would like to learn more about the program and/or participate in the facilitator training to be held at Mills Pond House on January 19th. Whatever your hopes may be for the months ahead, may it be a HAPPY NEW YEAR for you!

Sondra Irvine

Nissequogue River Watershed Steering Committee

The committee held a meeting at Nissequogue River State Park on Nov. 28, 2006. Representatives from the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative Committee shared information with the Nissequogue River Steering Committee.

Their plan is complete and being implemented. Walter Smith of the USDA NRCS CT office and Patricia Sesto from the Town of Wilton Office Of Environmental Affairs both stressed the importance of working at the local level. Action is taken on the local level. National and state regulations must be adhered to. To be successful a plan must include land use, ecology and conservation. It is important to have a broad based plan that encompasses the entire watershed. It is counterproductive to consider only specific areas. The three questions that must be addressed before any action can be taken are: Is what you want to do achievable? Can it be implemented? And is it Measurable?

Prior to this meeting the Nissequogue River Watershed Steering Committee had set up subcommittees to evaluate Habitat, Water Quality, Land Use and Open space. An Outreach Committee was established to inform the public as to the mission of the NRWC. The group has held a clean up at Short Beach, a river walk and a general meeting that was open to the public.



Kiernan Lannon, new Director, Smithtown Historical Society (in picture above with Sondra Irvine, LWV Smithtown President) was the guest speaker at LWV Smithtown's holiday party, held at the Mills Pond House on December 8. More than 25 LWV members and friends enjoyed great food, drink, and conversation to welcome the holiday season.

STAC
Smithtown Township Arts Council



Mills Pond House
660 Route 25A, St. James, NY 11780
631-862-6575 fax 631-862-8730

The League of Women Voters of Smithtown thanks Allison J. Cruz, Executive Director and the staff of the Smithtown Township Arts Council/ Mills Pond House Gallery for its support of the League.

We encourage all Town Residents to support the Arts Council, participate in its cultural programs, and visit the historic Mills Pond House in St. James. For info: www.stacarts.org.

**SMITHTOWN
TOWNSHIP
ARTS
COUNCIL**
REACH
FOR
THE
ARTS

WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU!

SHARE YOUR VIEWS ON LOCAL PROGRAM ISSUES!

All Smithtown LWV members are invited to a
2007 Program Planning Meeting
to be held at the Mills Pond House on
Thursday, **February 1, 2007** at noon.

Tea, coffee, and dessert will be provided, please bring your own lunch.
*The program planning meeting will be preceded at 11am by a
LWV Smithtown board meeting, which is open to all members*

Please read program details below to prepare for this meeting.

LWV-Smithtown Program for 2006-2007

A. Voter Service and Citizen Education

Voter Service is a primary function of the LWV of Smithtown. We will serve as a non-partisan source of information and education for voters and take action by:

1. Conducting voter registration drives throughout the community and encourage all eligible citizens to vote
2. Organizing as needed and providing trained moderators to serve for candidates forums to give every citizen the opportunity to hear the candidates views on important issues
3. Conducting educational forums about the local government process in order to promote greater citizen awareness
4. Training speakers as needed
5. Developing ideas for community service projects for students and youth organizations

B. Library

We will observe and report on the development of a long range plan for our public library and will help to inform the public about issues related to our library system.

C. Natural Resources Preservation

Under the Natural Resources position for preservation of open space and wetlands of the LWVNYS, we will continue action in support and enforcement of measures for preservation of the waterfront, wetlands, bird sanctuaries and open space usage of properties within Smithtown township, including the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center property and others as they become available.

D. Township Development

1. We will support an updated Master Plan to provide for controlled growth within the Township and revitalization of downtown Smithtown within the context of our present and projected economic conditions.
2. We will explore and address other items of concern relating to the welfare of the Township and its residents as they may arise.

A Kings Park Move

In deal that may mobilize bogged-down process, hospital property may be transferred to one agency for parkland, redevelopment
Newsday Staff Writers December 28, 2006

State officials have agreed on a new plan for the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center property that they are calling the most significant step in years toward getting the long-stalled redevelopment process under way.

Outgoing parks commissioner Bernadette Castro has persuaded other state officials to transfer most of the hospital property to her agency. The plan calls for 368 acres to be added to Nissequogue River State Park, which was created in 1999 from 153 adjacent acres of hospital property. Then the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation will request proposals for a private-public partnership for redeveloping part of the site where vacant buildings stand.

Castro sent a letter last Friday to General Services Commissioner John Spano requesting the transfer; Newsday obtained a copy of the letter.

The letter also specifies that General Services transfer 2.7 acres directly to the Kings Park fire district while 36 acres used by the state Office of Mental Health would be unaffected.

Castro's plan, which she had proposed earlier without success, supersedes a proposal being crafted for several months by State Sen. John Flanagan (R-East Northport). It called for about 90 acres where hospital buildings are located to be given to the Town of Smithtown, which then would have tried to put together a redevelopment plan. Flanagan, who in April obtained a state commitment for \$25 million for an environmental cleanup of the site, yesterday called the transfer to the parks department a "good deal." He added, "I'll work hard with the new administration to get more money toward the cleanup to make it the crown jewel of the North Shore. I have every intention to make sure that the Kings Park community has a tremendous say in what happens."

He added he had a commitment from the state to continue paying school taxes on the property.

Castro insisted "there will be a lot of public input."

Smithtown Supervisor Patrick Vecchio criticized the deal and said, "We're back to square one with contaminated land in our midst. I'm very wary of what New York State's intent is on the development of the 90 acres."

Linda Henninger, president of the Kings Park Neighbors Association, said, "We're thrilled that the property is going to the parks department ... We hope that whatever is developed there is positive also."

When asked about the letter, Castro said, "It's not a secret that I had wanted state parks to be the steward of the whole piece of property early on. So I think this is a very logical transfer. I think now everybody is ready for us to be involved with the property. We've proven ourselves with other partnerships we've done around the state." Castro was referring to deals such as a new boardwalk restaurant at Jones Beach and an expanded clubhouse and catering facility at Bethpage State Park.

The redeveloped land at Kings Park, which Castro said would total no more than 90 acres, would remain part of the state park and be leased to a developer, providing revenue to the park system. Castro said she would love to see the area used for educational or cultural purposes and one of the existing buildings used as a lodge for overnight stays.

Flanagan said he still hopes to arrange a land swap with Saint Johnland, a senior care facility. The organization owns pristine forest nearby that Flanagan hopes to swap for developed land on the Kings Park site.

Earlier this month, a judge dismissed a lawsuit by Cherokee Arker, a developer whose plan to build up to 1,800 homes on the site was criticized by Flanagan and residents. But the firm, which had a contract to buy the land, plans to appeal.

Yesterday, Cherokee executive Anselm Fusco Sr. said in light of the appeal, a transfer of the land by the state "is hard for us to imagine."

The site, closed in 1996, once housed one of the country's largest psychiatric facilities.

The history:

A number of plans have been debated for the redevelopment of the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center property.

1885: The Kings County Asylum, owned by Kings County, opens to treat the mentally ill.

1895: Center becomes state-owned.

1954: Center's population reaches about 9,300 patients and staff, but new therapies result in a declining population, continuing through the early 1990s.

cont...

Kings Park cont...

1996: Center closes; small number of patients and staff remain on site.

1999: Gov. George Pataki carves out 153 acres to become Nissequogue River State Park.

Dec. 1999: Hoping to block overdensity housing, Smithtown Town Board submits 13 conditions for use of the center land.

March 2000: State puts the property up for sale. Three bids are received. Officials say cleanup could cost \$50-\$60 million.

Jan. 2003: Legis. Lynne Nowick (R-St. James) proposes a \$25 million conversion of one building for county office space.

May 2003: Lamb Acquisitions LLC wins a bid to buy the property for \$7.5 million for mixed-use development.

June 2004: Lamb pulls out. Subsidiary of Erickson Re-

tirement Community wins a bid for \$7.12 million with plans for 1,500 senior housing units.

Oct. 2004: Erickson pulls out.

Dec. 2004: Cherokee Arker signs a \$6.5 million agreement to purchase the land to build up to 1,800 housing units.

Jan. 2006: State's Empire State Development Corp. drops contract with Cherokee Arker.

Feb. 2006: Cherokee Arker sues to force the state to go through with sale.

April 2006: State Sen. John Flanagan (R-East Northport) secures \$25 million for cleanup.

Oct. 2006: Flanagan proposes using 230 acres as state parkland and transferring the remainder to Smithtown for a dollar.

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CHARTER SCHOOL POSITION- LWVNYS

The League recognizes that charter schools represent an educational experiment whose efficacy has never received appropriate validation. Moreover, a review of the performance of charters in New York State indicates that, while some do an excellent job of educating children, others are less successful than the most substandard traditional public schools. Therefore, The League supports public funding of academic research into the characteristics of charters that lead to student academic success.

Authority to grant, oversee, renew and revoke charters, other than those granted in public school conversions, should be vested in a single entity. Charters should be subject to more stringent oversight of charter compliance in the renewal/revocation of process, with greater emphasis on positive educational outcomes.

The League supports measures to limit the negative financial impact of charter schools on their home districts, including: transition assistance; home district payment to charters based on the same standard used to pay operating aid to school districts (While the League supports enrollment as the appropriate measure, it believes the measure should be identical for both charters and traditional public schools.); separate levels of reimbursement for elementary and secondary education to charter schools based on what the home districts spend for the level of schooling provided; limitation of the percentage of a school district's budget that could be paid to charter schools. The League is opposed to State provision of capital construction and renovation services and reimbursement of capital expenditures for charter schools.

The League supports limitation of the number of charters issued in New York State. As a general matter, it believes that the number of charter schools should not be increased without prior successful implementation of the improvements outlined in this position. In lieu of amendment of the Charter School Act to increase the total number of charters that could be granted, it supports retention of the current total (100) with amendment of the Charter School Act so that a charter could be reissued if a charter school ceased to function for any reason. Any increase in the cap on charter schools should be tied to amendment of the Charter School Act so that charters are required to prove positive educational outcomes for all children (disaggregated by special needs) exceeding those in traditional public schools as a precondition for charter renewal. To more accurately measure student outcomes in charters and to compare them to those in traditional public schools, the League supports public funding to measure educational growth in individual students as they progress from grade to grade in charter schools (a value added approach).

Town Board Meetings

December 19, 2006

The last meeting of 2006, with all council members present. Suffolk County finally gave permission for Starbucks to open in the P.J. venture on Crooked Hill Rd. There will also be a Home Goods and Marshalls built in that shopping center along with the Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Kohls already there.

Councilman Ed Wehrheim complained about the disrepair of the white school building on Jericho Turnpike in Smithtown. He will send a letter to the school district on maintaining it. Supervisor Vecchio remarked that this is a historic house.

Councilwoman Gray wants to reinstitute Thursday night Town Board meetings at the Senior Citizen Center, alternating one night meeting and one day meeting. Vecchio said the Town Board meetings are mainly legislative meetings and complaints and issues are not necessary at the Town Board meetings. The Supervisor's office responds diligently to complaints, and night meetings have not worked in the past. He said he would think about it. Gray responded that we are living in a different environment today when both husband and wife are working and the Board meetings are not just for complaints.

Gray's next proposal has received a great deal of publicity to split the Town's legal notices among the town's two newspapers, the Smithtown News and the Smithtown Messenger. (The News currently carries all the legal notices.)

Councilwoman Biancianiello said she does support night meetings as good government. She inquired about the circulation of the two newspapers to get the message to the most people and pointed out that the News has won awards. Gray said she would get back with the numbers.

The afternoon session opened with a bombshell. The Board voted unanimously to suspend Town Chief Building Official Robert Bonerba for 30 days without pay and to initiate disciplinary action against him for alleged Ethics Code violations.

Gray read on the paid circulation numbers for the two newspapers: the News has 8,788 and the Messenger, 7,140. A vote was taken on splitting the ads between the newspapers and Gray was the only one to vote for it.

Lenore Cernitz asked for information on Robert Bonera and was told the employee might make a settlement with the town and they could not discuss

Smithtown Town Board Meeting Schedule

Tuesdays: January 9 and 23

9:30 am work session

2:00 pm regular meeting

Town Board meetings are scheduled to be held at Smithtown Town Hall

A public hearing will be held at 8:00 p.m., on Thursday, January 18, 2007, at the Eugene A. Cannataro Senior Center, 420 Middle Country Road, Smithtown

it. She said the taxpayers could not understand this and it "smells of corruption". Gray said Bonera will put in his retirement papers after 12/31/06.

Muriel Dietch complained about the "abuse and tomfoolery" the owners of Angel's Gate must endure" at their zoning board hearing and cannot understand why they are not grandfathered in.

Don Cantwell remarked that the Arker lawsuit against the Town for Kings Park property was settled last Friday and Senator Flanagan had said he wanted to give 140 acres to the Town. He stated that he has been pushing the Town Board for 10 years to meet with the state. (This has since become a moot point since New York State has transferred most of the property to the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.) He also suggested that the Town put out the publication of legal notices to competitive bidding. Vecchio remarked that he should run for public office, and Cantwell said he had and might again.

Mary Zopf, Observer

Library Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule

Regular meeting:

Tues. January 16

All meetings are held in the Main Library at 7pm

National League President Testifies Before U.S. Election Assistance Commission

League Calls on Commission to Promote “Pro-Voter” Reform

Washington, D.C. December 7, 2006

League of Women Voters President Mary G. Wilson today testified before an open meeting of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. The meeting, titled “Assessing the 2006 Election”, brought together experts and elections officials in an effort to shed light on how 2006 election administration went, what challenges voters faced at the polls, and what reforms to our election systems are needed in the future. [Click here to read the full testimony.](#)

“The question we ask today is, were the voters well served in 2006? And whether you were well served as a voter depended on three factors: where you live, who you are, and by what method you voted,” Wilson told the Commission. “Exit polling data showed that 87 percent of voters were confident their votes would be counted accurately. Yet, there were management problems such as long lines, poor ballot designs, paper ballot shortages, confusion about ID requirements and others.”

“It is extremely frustrating that we saw some of the same types of problems in 2006 that we saw in 2000” said Wilson. “Ballot design was the problem with the butterfly ballot in Florida in 2000 and ballot design seems to have been the problem in Sarasota’s undervote in 2006. It is time to start getting the basic management issues right.”

“Better election administration may not be the sexiest issue out there, but it is one on which we must focus. There are several critical questions that need to be addressed: How well does the election workforce -- from professional elections officials to volunteer poll workers -- do its job? How is the polling place organized and administered, and how is the election workforce recruited, trained and managed?” Wilson stated.

“The one issue that must be a priority for the EAC between now and 2008 is poll worker management... We need systems in place that are pro-voter; but they can’t be pro-voter if they are not pro-poll worker as well,” Wilson said. “The EAC can also play a powerful role in assessing why polling place administration problems happen, sharing best practices, and offering guidance to elections officials to make the system work better for the voter.”

“We need to apply the lessons of 2006 to make sure voters are well served in 2008 regardless of where they live, who they are, or by what method they voted. We need to make sure the answer to whether the system works in 2008 is not ‘It depends’ but a resounding ‘Yes,’” concluded Wilson.

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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.

LeaderSpark Training

**Friday, Jan. 19
Mills Pond House
12 noon—5pm**

**Please contact Sondra Irvine
or Lisa Scott if you are
interested in attending.**

SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS—THEY SUPPORT US

League of Women Voters of Smithtown

Membership Registration

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone # _____

Email _____

Even if you do not have time for active participation, your membership alone will strengthen our voice.

Individual Membership \$45.00

Household (2 at same address) 70.00

Student Membership 20.00

Additional Contribution _____

Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to LWV of Smithtown and mail to:

LWV of Smithtown
c/o Mary Zopf
21 Greene Drive
Commack, NY 11725

Please note:

Additional tax-deductible donations to the League beyond the dues amount may be made by writing a separate check to "LWVNYS Education Foundation" and mail to the address above. Thank you.



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ®
OF SMITHTOWN**

**322 River Road
St. James, NY 11780**

Address Correction Requested

**POSTMASTER:
DATED MAIL-
Please Rush!**

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 2007

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Mon. Jan. 8 | Smithtown LWW Board Meeting, Mills Pond House, 7pm |
| Tues Jan. 9 | Smithtown LWW Board Meeting, Mills Pond House, 7pm |
| Tues. Jan. 16 | Town Board Meetings, 9:30 am-Work Session; 2 pm-Regular Meeting |
| Tues. Jan. 17 | Library Board of Trustees Meeting, Main Library, 7 pm |
| Wed. Jan. 17 | LWVSC Board Meeting, Riverhead Library 10:00am |
| Wed. Jan. 17 | Global Warming -Smithtown Main Library, 7pm |
| Thurs. Jan. 18 | Town of Smithtown Public Hearing, Sen. Citiz. Cent. 8pm |
| Fri. Jan. 19 | LeaderSpark Training, Mills Pond House, 12 noon-5pm |
| Tues. Jan. 23 | Town Board Meetings, 9:30 am-Work Session; 2 pm-Regular Meeting |

February 2007

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Thurs. Feb. 1 | Smithtown LWW Board meeting Mills Pond House, 11am |
| Thurs. Feb. 1 | Smithtown LWW Program Planning Mills Pond House, 12 noon |