



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW CASTLE

The Voter

February/March 2007

from Jackie Rider

Presidents' Message

Are you one of those people who never learned how to program your VCR, now that everything is on DVD? Still can't text message your 15-year-old? Don't know what a text message is??

Electronic technology races forward at break-neck speed at every level of communication, including the voting process. The national media updates voters daily on the risks and errors of paperless DRE voting machines that were used in the most recent election. The New York State League of Women Voters continues to advocate statewide conversion to optical scan voting machines, which include a permanent paper ballot. State officials still want county election commissioners to decide between DRE's and op scans. Fortunately, New York hasn't rushed the decision process.

If the above alphabet soup has you more than slightly confused and very concerned about whether your vote will count in future elections, you'll definitely want to attend our March coffee for members and friends on the rapidly developing issues of electronic voting technology. Come Wednesday, March 21, 10am, to St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church in downtown Chappaqua to hear our own Marion Sinek and Laura Porter discuss what's out there now, who decides what we'll vote with and when the decision will be made. Learn about who controls software security and where our newly elected Governor stands on the subject.

You can get by without knowing how to TiVo, but come November 2008, you won't want to wonder who you just voted for.

Jackie Rider

LWV Coffee Wed., Mar. 21

New Voting Systems: Counting Every Vote and Making Every Vote Count

*with Marion Sinek and Laura Porter
to tell us about the latest developments*

St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church
Parish Hall, 10am-noon
carpooling recommended

Proposed Reader's Digest Redevelopment LWV Urges Town Board Dialogue with Summit/Greenfield

At the Town Board meeting on January 23, 2007, the League's Local Planning Committee urged Town Board members to initiate a dialogue with Summit/Greenfield on development possibilities for the Reader's Digest property. In a letter to the Board, the League noted that in rejecting Summit/Greenfield's rezoning petition for 348 condominium units, the Board now had an opportunity to discuss a range of options for the site, taking into consideration numerous factors including principles articulated in the Town's Master Plan. Reprinted below is the letter that was read and presented to the Board at the meeting:

To: Members of the Board of the Town of New Castle: Janet L. Wells, Supervisor; Barbara S. Gerrard, Deputy Supervisor; John Buckley; Elise Kessler Mottel; Robin Stout

The League of Women Voters of New Castle is a non-partisan civic organization whose mission is to promote informed and active participation in government; and to provide education, outreach and advocacy on issues with impact in our community. As part of our involvement with significant community issues, the League's Local Planning Committee has been engaged in a study of the proposed redevelopment of the Reader's Digest property.

With the denial last month of Summit/Greenfield's petition to rezone the Reader's Digest property, there are currently no other proposals before the town for consideration. At that same meeting when the Town Board voted its denial of the application, Felix Charney of Summit/Greenfield indicated his willingness to discuss a range of options for the site.

Before another proposal is submitted, the League of Women Voters of New Castle urges the Town Board to initiate a dialogue with Summit/Greenfield on alternate possibilities for the site. We urge the Town Board to take advantage of this moment of relative quiet to engage Summit/Greenfield in discussions on redevelopment options, to examine concepts that could provide benefit to New Castle while minimizing impacts; and to offer broad guidance on options that accord with our Town's Master Plan, particularly on the critical issue of density.

While we hope that much of this discussion can take place during Town Board meetings, we understand that

continued on p. 2

Millwood Fire District: Station #1 Scoping Session Held for Realis Property

The Realis property on Routes 120/133 in Millwood was the subject of a public scoping session held on January 25, 2007. The property, which is currently for sale, is being considered by the Millwood Fire Commissioners as a possible location for the fire district's new Station #1. Three other sites – the Millwood Lumber Supply, the Vesce Property (former home of the motorcycle shop), and the current location – are also under consideration and were the subject of a previous scoping session held in November 2005. The purpose of scoping is to obtain input on significant environmental issues that should be addressed in an Environmental Impact Statement, in accordance with NYS SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) law.

While a number of speakers expressed support for the fire fighters and a new fire station, many disputed the need for a fire station of nearly 24,000 square feet, as currently proposed by the Fire Commissioners, and questioned the costs associated with building a facility of that size. Residents of Henry Place questioned the Commissioners on the treatment of the covenant that limits their street to single-home development. Numerous other concerns were raised including waste management, watershed protection, noise, run-off, loss of trees, and whether the Fire Commissioners would ensure that no other buildings are erected on the 9-acre Realis site once the fire station was completed.

Janet Wells, Town of New Castle Supervisor, and Robert Anesi, Chair of New Castle's Planning Board, both urged the Fire Commissioners to share more information with regard to their plans, especially given the oversight role the Town will exercise for the proposed construction. In addition, Ms. Wells read and submitted scoping comments, as did representatives of the Millwood Task Force and the West End Neighborhood Taxpayers (WENT). WENT characterized the Fire Commissioners as close to purchasing the Realis property, and registered frustration that, after months of research and discussion, the Fire Commissioners had thus far not demonstrated a willingness to compromise on the design of the fire station.

John Kirkpatrick, planning consultant to the Millwood Fire Commissioners, expressed the Commissioners' preference to purchase the covenant from Henry Place residents, but acknowledged their authority to use eminent domain to condemn the covenant if necessary. He also noted that the size of the fire station ultimately built is likely to be smaller than the one currently proposed; and hoped that in the future, significant documents related to the Millwood Fire Station could be posted on the Town's website.

The League's Local Planning Committee read and presented the following comments for consideration for the final scoping document:

Questions for Millwood Fire House Scoping Document: Realis Property Jan. 24, 2007

Introduction

The League of Women Voters of New Castle is a non-partisan civic organization whose mission is to promote informed and active participation in government. Through activities such as our Candidates' Nights; forums and informational meetings; public questioning and comment before relevant town boards; and coverage in our newsletter, *The Voter*, the League provides public education and outreach on a broad array of issues with impact on our local community,

As part of our ongoing involvement with significant community issues, the League's Local Planning Committee has been following developments related to the proposed construction of a new fire house in the Millwood Fire District to replace the existing Station #1 on Route 120. The following are our comments to be considered for the Final Scoping Document for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Realis Property as a potential site for the new Station #1:

Size and Cost of the Proposed Fire Station

In the DEIS, please provide a full justification for the size and cost of the fire station. This should include a comparison of the Millwood Fire District with other districts of similar size in surrounding areas. For each district including the Millwood Fire District, the comparison should include, but not be limited to, the following factors: the number of households each serves; the size of the business community each serves; the total assessed tax value of each district; the number of fire stations and number of bays in each district; the square footage of the fire stations; other facilities offered in each of the stations, such as offices and public meeting rooms; and other relevant factors.

Ability of the Fire District to Pay for the New Fire Station

The DEIS should discuss the anticipated cost and financing of the project and all proposed alternatives, along with projected impacts on the tax rate. The desire and the ability of the District's tax payers to pay for such additional taxes should be evaluated.

Watershed Impact

The DEIS should discuss in detail the plans for waste management and environmental controls, and the approvals that will be required to maintain the integrity of the watershed. Sewering options for the site and alternatives should be considered.

Neighborhood Covenants

The DEIS should include a full discussion of any covenants restricting the use of the Realis Property. If

Westchester County Needs Septic Management!

The League of Women Voters of Westchester and LWV New Castle have been collaborating to advocate for a Septic Management Plan for the county. Based on findings and consensus from one county study and two New Castle studies, oversight of these systems is essential to ensure proper functioning and long-term efficacy. To date there have been no requirements for maintenance of the 40,000–45,000 systems; the county does not even have official records of numbers, sites, and ages. Our information tells us that most of these systems are over thirty years old and that many are failing—meaning that the untreated sewage is seeping into groundwater that makes its way into our drinking water. This is a public health issue.

If you are thinking that this does not concern you because you do not have a septic system, consider this: while the water supplies are located in north county, most south county residents drink this water. If you have well water, that water supply is threatened by mal-functioning septic systems.

The League Sewage Committee has had several meetings with the Board of Legislators Committee on Energy and Environment to urge its members to pass a septic management plan to protect water quality and public health. Discussions are just in the beginning stages. You can help now by letting your legislator know that (a) you think that this is an important issue and (b) that you encourage them to support a septic management plan to protect public health. Please send an email or make a call. This truly will help.

The Op-Ed piece below (published in *The New York Times* on Dec. 10) was written to inform the public of this critical need for proper management of septic systems. We will keep you posted on the progress on legislation, and at the appropriate time, will send Action Alerts for your support.

Roberta Wiernik, LWVW Environment Chair; and Joanne Knight, LWVNC Environment Chair

"A Drinking Problem"

Nine million people drink water from the New York City reservoirs, including the Croton Reservoir; approximately 800,000 of these are Westchester County residents. Twenty thousand homes in Northern Westchester get their water from wells.

While these water supplies have been considered safe, they are threatened by malfunctioning septic systems, which are placed on the property of individual houses, housing developments and businesses; these systems treat the wastewater on the premises instead of sending it to a central treatment plant. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, failing septic systems are the second largest cause of water pollution - and this includes drinking water. The agency estimates that 168,000 viral illnesses and 34,000 bacterial illnesses result every year from contaminated drinking water.

Of primary concern are the waterborne pathogens from feces seeping from malfunctioning septic systems. These pathogens are a threat to public health, a threat that became a reality in Westchester in 1996 when there was an outbreak of hepatitis caused by a septic system that contaminated the drinking water of a community well in New Castle.

Ten years later, Westchester County has done little to attack the causes of this dangerous situation. What the

county needs is tighter regulations for septic systems.

In 1997 the towns in the New York City watershed and Westchester County signed an agreement with the city to put aside money designated to safeguard the threatened water supply. In particular, some of this money was to be used to clean up and replace failing septic systems with sewers connected to county-owned treatment plants, thus diverting wastewater from the watershed.

Unfortunately, the allocation of money for the diversion plan never made it to a vote at the board of Legislators because constituents living near the plants asserted that these treatment facilities could not deal with increased sewage.

Septic systems can be a cost-effective and efficient means of treating wastewater if they are properly designed, sited, constructed and maintained. The Westchester County Department of Health regulates the first three criteria, but no agency oversees maintenance once the system is installed. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, it is the lack of maintenance that leads to system failure; therefore, the agency has issued guidelines to encourage communities to adopt effective maintenance programs.

Westchester County has about 45,000 septic systems. Most of them are more than 30 years old, and were built with

what is now outdated technology and under regulations that were weak or non-existent. Many of these systems are failing and could potentially pollute our water. The county needs to establish a program to ensure that owners of septic systems know how to care for them and that they are being regularly maintained by qualified persons.

Counties and states across the country have set up septic management plans to provide oversight, education, and inspections. In fact, the Westchester County Department of Planning drafted such a plan in 2000; for unexplained reasons, the plan was shelved and so far nothing has replaced it.

At a minimum, the county plan should include an education program on maintenance for owners of septic systems, and a requirement for regular pumping and inspections by certified persons with copies of these records sent to the Department of Health for inclusion in a database for tracking compliance.

It would be a shame if we waited until a larger public health emergency, like the hepatitis incident, frightened us into finally taking this action to protect our drinking water."

*Rosemary MacLaughlin, President
Roberta Wiernik, Chair,
Environment Committee*

Observer Notes**Board of Education Meeting – February 6, 2007**

Board Members Present: President Susan Habermann, Robert Gursha, Janet Benton, Lisa Davis, Jay Shapiro. Faculty Present: Superintendent Dr. David A. Fleishman, Asst. Superintendent Dr. Lyn McKay

Mr. Huppuch, Principal of Westorchard, began the meeting by paying tribute to Ms. Anadi Malcolm, a second grade teacher who died recently.

Financial

The Board accepted the December monthly financial report and approved financial agreements to pay contractors who finished projects at Seven Bridges and Greeley after the original contractor defaulted.

Presentation: Future of Languages in Chappaqua.

Presenters: Bell French Teacher Jeanne Anzalone, Greeley Foreign Languages Chair Steve McKenney, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Lyn McKay, Staff Developer Suzi Novak

After the Tri-States Self-Study recently, it was decided to postpone the introduction of foreign languages at the elementary level because the school day was very crowded, to continue French, Latin and Spanish in grades 5-8 and to add a fourth language at the high school. Since then, curriculum maps have been developed for grades 5-8, research has been conducted regarding adding another language, department and school data has been studied and the staff has engaged in a decision making process. The high school decision has been postponed due to the restructuring at the high school.

Many factors must be considered when determining what should be offered in the future. It is important to consider the purposes of the program. Is the intention to build fluency in conver-

sation, to prepare for a global economy, to foster cultural understanding, etc.?

The district must choose between several possible instructional models at both elementary and high school levels. These range from total immersion to classroom-based instruction to area/cultural studies where language is part of the class but not the main focus.

The impact on the school community must be considered in terms of scheduling, enrollment in other languages, budget, and articulation between programs at different grade levels.

A major problem is the lack of certified teachers. Chappaqua has had difficulty finding Latin teachers. A survey of certified applicants for language positions in NY turned up 9 teachers of Mandarin Chinese, 7 Russian teachers, 13 Latin teachers and 6 Japanese teachers. By comparison, there were over 1000 applicants for English positions and 4000 for Social Studies. Dr. Fleishman suggested that a regional approach and sharing might be needed to find teachers for languages like Arabic and Chinese.

Starting this February, Middle School and High School foreign language committees will begin to investigate options for future instruction. The options include: an elementary immersion program, additional instruction in grade 5, an additional entry point—perhaps in grade 7, maintaining current programs—especially Latin, and additional language offerings. They will seek input from the community. They hope to present a proposal to the Board by October '07, to complete the plan by December '07 and to put the changes in place by September '08.

The Board had a lengthy discussion after the presentation.

Nine community members also spoke, stressing the desire to expand the foreign language programs and especially to find a teacher so Latin can continue.

President's Report

Ms. Habermann announced that the School Board Nominating Committee will have an informational meeting Feb. 22 at the Bell Library. The Parent Survey on School Lunch Offerings is available on the web site and the community is asked to participate in the survey.

Ms. Davis reported on the National School Board Association meeting. She felt that there was optimism that more funding for IDEA and NCLB might be available. Neither program has ever been funded to the extent promised.

Superintendent's Report

A Science Review has been conducted recently. It has been decided that earth science will not be taught separately but will be integrated with Middle School science. However more will be taught in 8th grade than previously.

Other Business

Board members toured Westorchard and Seven Bridges and looked at problem areas including the brickwork in some lintels at Westorchard and the roof and gutter in the Seven Bridges library. Both buildings appear to be well maintained.

The Board approved policies on Extra Classroom Activities, Independent Auditor and Nonaligned Administrative Personnel.

*Barbara Meyers
Observer*

Leaguers Welcome New Citizens at Naturalization Day at White Plains

Every once in a while we are given pause to appreciate what it means to be a citizen of the USA. Jane Lindau and I had such an occasion on February 7th when we served as LWV representatives at a naturalization ceremony at the White Plains Courthouse.

Honorable William Sherwood, Supreme Court Justice, presided and conferred citizenship to 102 foreign citizens or nationals. Susan Kiernan, Chief Deputy County Clerk, introduced the candidates to Justice Sherwood and County Clerk, Timothy Itoni administered the Oath of Allegiance. We Leaguers were privileged to lead them in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Justice Sherwood spoke about what a privilege and pleasure it is to preside over a naturalization ceremony. People work hard to obtain citizenship and they are truly appreciative and proud to become Americans.

After the candidates received their certificates of naturalization and had their pictures taken, if they so opted, Jane and I handed them voter registration information and urged them to vote. We congratulated people who originally came from all parts of the globe—Central America, South America, Ireland, England, Ghana, Egypt, India, and China, to name a few. They were truly grateful and eager to exercise their voting privileges.

LWV members from all over Westchester take turns participating in the bimonthly naturalization ceremony in White Plains. It is an important League service and a rewarding experience.

Amy McNamara and Jane Lindau



Keeping an Eye on the Bridge

Tappan Zee Bridge Forum Tuesday, February 27

All are welcome to attend this public meeting, which will be held Tuesday, February 27, from 4pm to 8pm at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College. Engineers have been at work fleshing out the issues involved in the various options on the table so that feasibility studies and cost estimates can be realistically discussed. Color maps will be available. By July, the project teams will decide on a specific design for each alternative. A final recommendation is projected for the end of 2008.

More info at www.tzbsite.com. (or call Susan Schwarz at 332-1301).

**Millwood Firehouse
Realis Scoping**

continued from page 3

any have to be overturned, the DEIS should describe the process for so doing and the costs involved.

**Unsuitability of Existing
Fire Station**

The DEIS should address the specifics of why the current location is unsuitable for a new fire station. It should also consider how the old site would be used after the construction of a new fire station on a new site. If the intention is to sell the property, an estimate of the sale price should be included.

Compliance with Town Zoning

The DEIS should address whether the proposed fire station is compliant with the regulations of current Town Zoning Code and those of the Millwood Overlay District. If not, it should discuss the zoning changes necessary to accommodate the proposed building and alternatives.

Outdoor Activities

The DEIS should address any outdoor activities, including training, that would take place on the site and at alternative sites.

*Sheila Crespi
Local Planning Committee*

Environment Committee

The Committee usually meets the first Friday morning of the month at 10am at the home of Joanne Knight in Chappaqua. Members interested in the environment are welcome to come and see what the committee is doing before making a commitment to join it.

Please call Joanne first (238-7529) to make sure the schedule hasn't changed. See p. 4 about the committee's work on septic management and drinking water in Westchester.

JOIN US!

If your membership has expired (see your address label), renew!

2006/2007 Membership
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW CASTLE
PO BOX 364, Chappaqua, NY 10514

Membership Dues: to June 30, 2007
Individual \$55; Family \$80; Student \$21
Check payable to LWV of New Castle

I enclose for membership \$ _____

I am adding a tax-deductible contribution
to the LWVNC Citizen Education Fund \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

I would like to work on:

Local Issues Voter Service

State/National Issues TV Production

Schools Observe Public Meetings

Call me to discuss what I can do

I cannot be active at this time, but I want to support LWV goals with my membership.

February/March 2007

Fair Campaign Practices Committee Seeks Coordinator. If you love local politics and would like a finite role in the thick of the election cycle; if you are perceived as non-partisan (and not involved in party politics); if you are comfortable with emails and faxes; and would enjoy working with a great committee of community leaders with hearings at the Westchester Community Foundation: then give me a call for more information.

Susan Schwarz, 332-1301



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OF NEW CASTLE**
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LWV Coffee Wed., Mar. 21
**New Voting Systems: Counting Every Vote
and Making Every Vote Count** *see page 1*

CALENDAR

Tuesday, Mar. 6th 8:15pm	Board of Education Bell School
Tuesday, Mar. 13th 7:45pm	Town Board Town Hall
Tuesday, Mar. 13th 8:15pm	Board of Education Bell School
Wednesday, Mar. 14th 9:30am board meeting	LWV Board Meeting Home of Sheila Crespi 5 Round Hill Rd., Chappaqua
Tuesday, Mar. 20th 7:30pm	Library Board Chappaqua Library
Tuesday, Mar. 20th 8:15pm	Board of Education Bell School (Budget Work Session)
Wednesday, Mar. 21st 10am-12:00	LWV Coffee: New Voting Systems St. Mary the Virgin Church Parish Hall
Tuesday, Mar. 27th 7:45pm	Town Board Town Hall

Inside

Presidents' Message 1
 Reader's Digest Update 1
 Millwood Firehouse Scoping.....3
 Environment Septic Mgmt4
 Observer Notes9
 Naturalization Day.....10

*See page 9 for Observer Notes on
foreign language curriculum in
Chappaqua Schools*

Observer Coordinator Cory
Ethridge's email address was in-
correct last issue. It should be
coral.ethridge@verizon.net. We
still need observers—don't be shy,
email Cory to volunteer!

Visit Our Website
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