



The League of Women Voters of The Rivertowns

Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson and Irvington
www.watpa.org/lwv/rivertowns

BULLETIN – DECEMBER 2009

President's Letter

Dear Fellow Members and Friends of the League,

*Another election season has come and gone with a number of hotly contested local elections. The Rivertowns League held a candidates night in Dobbs Ferry for the mayoral and village trustee candidates that was well-attended and featured lively discussions of local issues. Thanks go to **Jean Howell** for organizing the debate and to **Liz Dreaper** who volunteered her time to videotape the proceedings for airing on cable television.*

We distributed 1,500 Voter Guides throughout the Rivertowns at libraries, schools, churches, and many businesses.

*Our coffee & conversation program is well underway. **Kathy Sundaram** organized the most recent program at the Hastings Community Center and drew the biggest crowd and liveliest conversation so far. We welcome input from our members regarding topics and speakers at future programs which will be scheduled in the spring.*

*Another enjoyable event this month was a visit to the Rivertowns by **Betsey Swan**, President of the New York State LWV. Ms. Swan attended the County League's healthcare committee meeting at the home of **Christine Verber** in the afternoon and was the overnight guest of **Jean and Ernie Howell**, who also graciously entertained a group of us for coffee, dessert and a wide-ranging and most genial discussion.*

With warmest wishes for a healthy and happy holiday season.

Lindsay Nicely Feinberg

Board Briefs

October: In addition to our ongoing League business, which includes updates and planning on Health Care, the Waterfront, League Coffees and Candidates Nights, we had a guest speaker. County Legislator Tom Abinanti spoke about his position on the County settlement regarding affordable housing.

November: We made plans to welcome Betsey Swan, president of the New York State LWV, to the Rivertowns League. She will attend a Health Care Committee meeting on Monday 11/16 at Chris Verber's home, and Jean Howell will host a dessert and coffee that evening at her home, where Betsey will be staying. Plans were finalized for the next Coffee, which is on 11/18. The time and venue have been changed to try to accommodate more participants. The Waterfront Committee is keeping an eye on tree cutting at Water's Edge and building demolition at the Hastings Waterfront.

BETSEY SWAN WAS *HERE!*

Following up on one of three major goals set by her administration (bridge the divide between state and local Leagues, improve League's financial base, and bring a new level of dynamism to LWV), president **Betsey Swan** has embarked on an ambitious outreach program. Rivertowns was privileged to host Betsey on November 16; then she was off to Bronxville on November 17.

The LWVW Health Committee, at its November 16th meeting received valuable state input and support on this currently hot issue; then, from her base at Jean Howell's home, the stimulation continued with a discussion of multiple and diverse issues (political, League) for interested members able to assemble at short notice.

Our state president invited members with ideas, suggestions or comments to keep in touch.

HEALTH CARE - NASW-LWVR

Mark Hannay, Director, New York Metro Health Care For All Campaign, and Mary Beth Morrissey, MPH and Health Care Attorney, Fordham Ravazzin Center on Aging, discussed pending legislation and health care cost at a forum October 19th, sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers Westchester and LWVW, at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in White Plains.

Mr. Hannay reported that the **good news** is: the President and Congressional leaders are committed to moving forward. Some proposals: higher Medicaid floor (would not affect NY much); Medicare streamlining, elimination of Part D "doughnut hole" and a 14% subsidy to Medicare Advantage plans; insurance company regulation; employer mandate to provide coverage or pay into a fund; individual/family coverage mandate; subsidies to financially stressed; public insurance option; increased preventive care. Contentious issues are being debated. Some bottom lines are: **reduce cost, guarantee choice, and ensure quality for all.** Ms. Morrissey discussed related legal and technical issues.

Meanwhile the LWVW health care committee remains active; during the next month pressure will be kept on Congress to include a robust public option in the national health (insurance) reform act. (**Suggestion: contact your senator.**) The November 16 meeting was enlivened by state input from guest Betsey Swan, LWVNYS president. **Next meeting: Monday, December 7, 1:30 PM**, at the home of Madeline Zevon (761-4382), 17 Dupont Ave., White Plains.

FROM NATIONAL

LWVUS is working for passage of Affordable Health Choices of 2009, with ad campaigns in key states (30 second TV spot). The League supports a strong public option, and deplors desperate tactics of reform opponents. (Note: although this bill does not meet local hopes, it appears to be a step forward.)

What can you do? Remain in touch with legislators!

In a letter with copies to Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Boehner, LWVUS urged the Office of Congressional Ethics to continue its independent role in the ethics process. Also they thanked Senator Leahy for leadership in protecting and advancing government transparency.

COMING UP: League's 90th anniversary, 2010!

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES—AGING IN PLACE

A livable community is safe and secure with access to affordable housing, public transportation, recreation, and other amenities. At the LWVR October 16 Coffee and Conversation, Linda Shulz, of Westchester Jewish Community Services, described a county program which evolved from the 2006 U. S. Conference on Aging. The Westchester Department of Senior Programs & Services accessed local and federal dollars to enlist existing community and faith organizations, 57 so far, to determine needs and supply service. "With a grant ... WJCS is coordinating the Livable Community Connections Project for Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Elmsford, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington, Tarrytown and the Town of Greenburgh." **761-0600, Ext. 314 or www.wjcs.com.**

Westchester, one of the oldest suburbs in the U.S. has a population of 187,000 persons over 60 years of age (one in five residents). Some issues that have surfaced: taxes, cab fare, stressed caregivers, need to publicize already-existing services, management of chronic illness...Workshops and educational speakers are available for local sites.

With a slightly different but cooperative focus, Gene Robbins, Ardsley, described Aging in Place, a movement which spread from Boston, and works to see that needed services are in place. For example, Gramaton Village in Bronxville, for a \$360/year membership, provides safety checks, referral for medical service, help with forms and computers, workshops, social and recreational opportunities, discounts on air travel and retail goods, vetting of providers and discounts on home repair, transportation to shopping and medical appointments. Mr. Robbins is a retiree volunteer with the Advertising Group of Westchester. 80% of seniors wish to remain in their own homes.

For more info about Livable Communities: **914-813-6406 or Bab6@westchestergov.com**

ANOTHER “COFFEE AND CONVERSATION” (more good info)

Senior Services ... Medicare questions ... Sustainable environment. With a change of site and time, but still featuring Starbucks coffee and goodies, LWVR continued its series of issues forums on November 17 at the Hastings Community Center.

Jenny Murphy (478-2586), Hastings-on-Hudson’s Senior Outreach Worker, described the many services available: help with forms and “complaints”, five-day-a-week fitness program, shopping transportation twice a week, nutrition program (\$2.50 lunch on weekdays in Dobbs Ferry), Friends in Service assistance with medical appointments, Meals on Wheels, help with temporary rehabilitation needs (equipment), recreation, support groups (caregiver, bereavement). Jenny invites telephone contact, and suggestions (start computer training, etc.). The program can also be accessed through a link with the Hastings village web site.

Jack Gavin (478-0130) addressed problems that Medicare recipients may face - such as how to interpret the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Service’s publication, “Medicare & You” The **Medicare Rights Center (1-800-MEDICARE)** can explain drug plans, doughnut holes, Medicare Advantage, health care proxies, and other Medicare related questions. Its phones are staffed by young, dedicated employees. Mr. Gavin can provide a worksheet, “How to Compare Medicare Prescription Drug Plans”; selection of a plan requires considerable analysis and a commitment must be made by December 31st.

Elisa Zazzera, co-founder of Sustainable Hastings, after referencing **Waste and Want**, a history of trash, stressed that the concept “frugal” needs to return; many areas of our country are awash in garbage; we produce approximately 2.4 pounds of garbage/per person/per day. Local trash goes to a Yonkers transfer station, then to Peekskill where it is burned to produce electricity. Ms. Zazzera and audience members shared many tips for recycling no-longer-useful-to-us items. A good slogan is, “Reduce, recycle, use up, wear out.”

Our next Coffee and Conversation will be in March, 2010. Watch the Bulletin for details.

WATERFRONT happenings

McLaren Engineering has developed a DF Waterfront Park shoreline stabilization and upland improvement Plan. Goals are to: maintain land area, enhance appearance, provide protection and stabilization, incorporate Master Plan concepts for upland, and maintain the police boat dock. Grant applications for remediation funds (estimated at \$4 M) have been submitted by the village. If approved, the work would be phased, to prevent closure of parking, etc.

We invite you to the LWVR Waterfront Group’s next scheduled meeting: Monday, November 9, 1:30 PM, at the home of Mary Wall; 150 Draper Lane, Apt. 1GN (reached by the brick walk). We focus on the Hudson River and watershed issues.

ELSEWHERE ON THE HUDSON

PARK OPENINGS:

Walkway over the Hudson State Historic Park & Walkway Loop Trail - Poughkeepsie
Harrier Hill groundbreaking in Columbia County (Scenic Hudson)

Highbridge Park & Water Tower (Manhattan)

High Line in lower Manhattan on an abandoned elevated track

Greg Cleary notes **Outcome of GM site talks will affect Hudson River for years;**
Problems include recent GM financial woes, and default on “payment in lieu of taxes” to
Sleepy Hollow on assessed valuation \$10 M (a fraction of value)

Scenic Hudson reports that “**General Electric’s dredging of toxic PCBs in the upper Hudson River** is back on track after an early August setback when water monitoring results exceeded stringent standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency. As a result the EPA ordered enhanced engineering controls of dredge sites to reduce PCB spillage back into the river.” **Scenic Hudson supports the cleanup.**

VOTING

In the recent election, nineteen New York counties participated in a pilot Optical Scan voting machine project. Seated in booths separated by partitions, voters marked paper ballots. Then walked to machines to scan in ballots.

Some voters complained of inadequate privacy (too-low partitions, etc.), or the size and placement of booths. Some critics raise the possibility of fraud.

IN THE RIVERTOWNS

We are pleased to welcome new members who have joined the Rivertowns League in recent months: **Jean Cadet, Barbara Collier, Doris Friedman, Janet Jensen, Paul Jeuttner, Juanita Kirkman, Yumiko Miura, Diana Regan, Daphne Romano,** and **Geraldine Timony** and long time National member, **Maria Harris.**

Thanks to LWWNYS president, **Betsey Swan** for her outreach to local Leagues. She visited the Westchester Health Committee on November 16, at **Chris Verber’s** home.

While we’re at it, **Kathy Sundaram** and **Chris Verber** have our gratitude for the successful November 17 “Coffee and Conversation” at the Hastings Community Center.

Our League did its part to encourage an informed electorate for the November elections. We distributed **1,500 Voter Guides** to strategic locations in our four villages and sponsored a lively debate among the **Dobbs Ferry candidates** for mayor and trustees.

The proposed **Dobbs Ferry Zoning Code Revision** and **Vision Plan** are currently the subject of hearings. **Watch for dates!**

AN INVITATION FROM LWV WESTCHESTER

Please join the County League for an enjoyable Holiday luncheon on Thursday, December 3rd at the Scarsdale Congregational Church, 1 Heathcote Road, Scarsdale. The luncheon price is \$25.00 per person and parking is available directly across from the church. For reservations, call Kitt Rosenthal, 723-5126 or email KittR@optonline.net.

Looking ahead - IMPORTANT DATES!

Thursday, Dec 3: LWVW Holiday Luncheon – Scarsdale Congregational Church, 1 Heathcote Road, Scarsdale – 12:00 noon.

Monday, Dec 7: LWVW Health Care Committee - home of Madeline Zevon, 17 Dupont Avenue, White Plains - 1:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec 8: Rivertowns LWV Board Meeting - Hastings Community Center – 7:00 p.m.
(If main door is locked enter via outside stair to lower level meeting rooms.)

Monday, Jan 18: Waterfront Group - Home of Mary Wall, 150 Draper Lane, 1 GN (via brick walk) - 1:30 p.m.

Note: All Board meetings are “open” and we welcome your participation. Future dates:
Jan 12, 2010, Feb 9, Mar 9, Apr 13, and May 11
Saturday, June 5: Rivertowns LWV Annual Meeting and Luncheon

NOTE: ALL MEMBERSHIPS NOW EXPIRE APRIL 1. UNLESS YOU RENEWED SINCE JANUARY 1, 2009, PLEASE SEND YOUR RENEWAL NOW

LWV The Rivertowns – MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Name: _____ E-mail: _____
Address: _____ Telephone _____

Check one: Basic Member Single \$50 Household \$75
 Friend of LWV Single \$75 Household \$100

Tax Deductible Contribution to the Fund for Citizen Education \$ _____

My interests are: Voter Service__ Water Front__ Observer Corps__ Youth Outreach__
Fund Raising__ Membership__ Bulletin/Public Relations__ Health Care__
Global Warming __ Other _____

Please make checks payable to: LWV the Rivertowns
Mail to: LWV The Rivertowns, P.O. Box 142, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

***LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE RIVERTOWNS
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