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Examiner
ELECTION
2015 GUIDE
Tight Legislative 1 Race Pits Scuccimarra Against Osborne

By David Propper

Two candidates are running for the District 1 Legislative Seat that serves Philipstown, Cold Spring and part of Putnam Valley.

Barbara Scuccimarra
Republican Incumbent

As a first term incumbent, Barbara Scuccimarra, a Republican, believes she’s delivered for her constituents on the western side of Putnam. Fighting to bring a senior center at the Butterfield redevelopment has been Scuccimarra’s “proudest moment,” a journey she described as long and arduous that required work with various stakeholders. She asserted the need is there for an improved senior center because the previous location was much too small and not all seniors went to the American Legion. Outside of the Butterfield fight, Scuccimarra said combating the drug crisis has been on her radar, noting there have been several deaths as a result of drug overdoses. She’s part of a coalition that brings forward awareness and education. She also helped bring a School Resource Officer to Haldane High School, which it didn’t have before. While the big things are important, Scuccimarra said she finds working on smaller, more personalized problems to be gratifying. “My door is always open, my phone is always on,” she said. “I welcome people calling with individual issues.” Though her opponent has said Philipstown can do better, Scuccimarra’s retort is: “In what way?” Now that a new senior center is imminent, Scuccimarra thinks other services can follow. She highlighted the county helps in other ways like providing election services free of cost and paying the bulk toward community college expenses. Other social services like for seniors or women are programs Scuccimarra will work on getting if elected again. She also stressed there is a difference between being beholden to a group, like Lithgow Osborne claims she is, and working together, which Scuccimarra said she does. “When you get elected, you go in and work with who’s in office,” Scuccimarra said. “I believe in my heart you get more done that way.” Scuccimarra points to her record over three years as to why she deserves another three. "Look at what I’ve done in my community for the past 40 years," she said. "I have a proven record. What has (Osborne) done?"

Lithgow Osborne
Democratic Challenger

Democratic challenger Lithgow Osborne believes his district on the west side of Putnam County is not being served adequately and that it deserves "a stronger advocate." Osborne questioned how much his opponent has actually done and said there should have been “less rubber stamping and more advocating” during her term in office. He stressed incumbent Barbara Scuccimarra has spent too much energy on certain legislation like a polystyrene ban in government buildings and other environmental issues that while admittedly important, are easy for everyone to get behind. As a “man of strong conviction,” Osborne said he doesn’t fit in one peg and isn’t beholden to any one group or person. He vows to scrutinize fiscal accountability and demand more transparency. He said one idea the county now has—bringing county clerk services to western Putnam—is an initiative Osborne was touting when he ran for county clerk last year and lost. While a senior center seems to be a lock that Osborne brought in, Osborne thinks the county is thinking too small. He would like to see a full-time staffer hired to look at day-to-day programming for seniors. Because places like Cold Spring and Philipstown bring in so much sales tax that goes back to the county, Osborne said his district doesn’t see enough of that money back and wants to see sales tax shared with the towns. “I would like to work to get some of that money back to us,” he said. “Even if it’s just $100 per person, per taxpayer.” Regarding the county budget, though Osborne understands how tough it is with state mandates, he argues the county must find “newer, better ways” to cut down on expenses. “There are always ways you can save money,” he said. “I just don’t believe a budget that size there isn’t room to trim a little fat off.” Focusing on the Office of Tourism, Osborne questions the hires in the agency and would rather see consultants brought in to avoid pension and other benefit costs. Osborne thinks voters should elect him because “I’m a strong, independent advocate for both Philipstown and Putnam Valley.”

Castellano Looks to Fend Off Riley in District 7 Race

By David Propper

Two candidates look to earn the District 7 Legislative Seat that represent parts of Southeast, Brewster, and Mahopac.

Joe Castellano
Republican Incumbent

As Joe Castellano finishes up his first term in office, he states Putnam County is a better place in the last three years. “I think we’ve done a great job,” he said. “I think I’ve done a great job.” One issue Castellano has tackled during his first term and wants to continue to push if elected again is getting infrastructure in Brewster and Southeast back to suitable conditions. The decrepit Morningthorpe Bridge, which is county-owned, is one bridge Castellano noted the county got state funding to turn into a walking bridge. Castellano added the county is working with state senator Terrence Murphy to get funding to replace the Carmel Avenue Bridge going into Brewster and there are also MTA bridges that need to be fixed, as well. He stated his support of money going into Putnam County Golf Course has been vindicated, because it’s become a “destination” in the county and has put more people to work. Castellano also said he believes the money put into Tilly Foster Farm is wise. He stressed the property needed upgrades and that buildings were crumbling. While the process isn’t complete, it’s going to be another county property to be proud of, Castellano said. An initiative Castellano wants to further push going into next term is video taping court hearings that would be a “big cost savings” because prisoners don’t need to be transported back and forth. Fiscally, Castellano said the county has been able to stay under the tax cap while providing better services. The bike path is set to expand more into the village of Brewster and that can help tourism and local businesses. He stated the fund balance has remained strong, though close to $8 million could be taken out this year. As an often-time supporter of County Executive MaryEllen Odell, Castellano said she’s doing a great job and should continue at the pace she’s going. Castellano works in the Westchester County Clerks Office and runs the legal division. He previously was on the town zoning board for eight years and all of that wraps into a lawmaker who has the qualifications for the job. “I have good understanding how government works, I have a great understand how county government works,” he said. “I have a vision where we can save money.”

John Riley
Democratic Challenger

Throughout his campaign, John Riley, a Democrat, has railed against the fact that the county Legislature is ruled by one-party and “anything that the Republicans want, they get. There’s unchanged on next page
Fleming Looks to Hold Kent Supervisor Seat Over Illuminate

By David Propper
A late entrance by the Conservative candidate has two candidates vying for the Kent supervisor’s seat.

Maureen Fleming
Democratic Incumbent

Even if it’s minimized by her opponent, Maureen Fleming points to the promises she has kept during her first term in office, after bouncing former supervisor Kathy Doherty in 2013. She’s balanced the budget, opened up meetings to the residents, and requires bids for services the town is seeking. “I think people in Kent and the taxpayers in Kent are very concerned about their taxes,” Fleming said. For the second straight year, there is a proposed no tax increase budget as the town provides the same services, Fleming said. In fact, she said the highway department is getting new equipment after facing deep cuts in the past. Fleming defended and scoffed at recent attacks by opponent Dennis Illuminate. While he has been critical of the recreation department, Fleming said the issues with recreation started before she arrived. To rectify the issue, she and Councilman Bill Huestis have been working with the recreation department to improve it. Fleming also shot back at Illuminate’s attack about Lake Carmel and its problems with the beaches being closed. Fleming said one of her first actions in office was advertising for a Lake Carmel advisory board. Interestingly enough, Fleming said Illuminate was selected for the board, but has rarely shown up for meetings. He recently showed up to a meeting, Fleming noted, now that he is running for office.

Fleming pointed out blue-green algae in lakes has been a problem felt throughout the state and county and not just in Kent. Fleming said the board has encouraged homeowners in the area to have their septic cleaned out and pick up pet feces, which contribute to better lake health. “We need to take a proactive approach to lake testing and we need community involvement,” she said. Going into another possible term, Fleming said she wants to push development along the Route 52 corridor and has been in touch with realtors and has worked with the Kent Chamber of Commerce. Fleming believes during her short time in office, the town has made strides. “We’ve really brought an air of professionalism,” she said. “I work cooperatively and collaboratively not only with board members across the aisle, but with other governmental agencies.”

Castellano Looks to Fend Off Riley in District 7 Race

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Riley in District 7 Race

no pushback and I think we need some pushback.” Riley gave several instances where he thinks heavier scrutiny is necessary, like spending at Putnam County Golf Course and Tilly Foster Farm. While there are claims by the county executive administration that the golf course is turning a profit, he questions if all the expenses are being revealed. He also wondered why a $1 million bond was floated for Tilly Foster fixes has now turned into a $1.5 million one. While Riley, a business risk manager, concedes reducing the budget significantly wouldn’t be possible, he argued the county’s hiring practice must be overhauled. The politically connected are getting jobs, Riley said, and not applicants that are the best qualified. “If you had that person, you’d probably have to pay them the same amount of money, but you’d get better results,” Riley said. He also thinks Putnam needs to sell itself better. With Putnam’s cost of living lower than surrounding counties like Westchester, people should be “flocking” to the county, he said, and trails and other attractions should be better advertised. “I don’t really know what the Office of Tourism is doing and what they say they’re accomplishing, but I don’t get enough feedback to believe they’re doing everything they can.” His opponent is a “competent guy,” but Riley thinks he “follows the leader” voting too often with the proposals County Executive MaryEllen Odell puts forth. “He votes with his boss 100 percent of the time,” Riley said. If Riley is elected, he looks forward to injecting some new blood and some balance into the legislature. “Just getting the other side even if we were equals in every way we should have a government that shouldn’t be all Republican,” he said.
Andy Falk - Democrat

In order for Patterson to improve and change, Andy Falk knows he’s the man for the job. “It’s an opportunity to have someone with new vision, new ideas in town and the only person running on a platform of a new vision and ideas is the guy who hasn’t been part of town hall for the past 20 years.” The main issue Falk knows the town must address is stabilizing taxes, noting the budget has tripled over the past 20 years. It’s all on the backs of property owners, Falk said, because business has been stagnant for too long. Falk wants to send a message to businesses that the town is open to them. He noted that along Route 22, there is plenty of business activity in Southeast and Pawling, but likens the business activity in Patterson to “the Sahara.” Falk wants to encourage commercial development within the town. One way to do that is he would advocate to have Route 311 opened up from I-84 in order to make travel for commercial vehicles easier. He would also fight for high-speed data, which can be essential to any business. It would require a company like Verizon to do a build-out and the cost would be split with New York State. There was a public service commission hearing about building-out Verizon-Fios for communities that don’t have it, and Falk said he was disappointed no one from Patterson town government attended the meeting in Poughkeepsie. Falk also argued there is a “disconnect” between town hall and average citizens. “People are very concerned that they feel town hall isn’t responsive to them,” Falk said. “That it’s run for a group of insiders.” Falk is troubled by the amount of money that could be taken from the fund balance—roughly $500,000—to keep the budget under the tax cap. He stressed that money should be reserved in case of emergency, like if the town faces another brutal winter. He’s especially critical of the town board and his opponent Rich Williams for getting raises the last several years. “You need someone to be the fiscal hawk in town hall,” Falk said. “Nobody’s been doing that. It’s about time someone came in and said I’m going to be that fiscal hawk.” One recent controversial issue in town is whether to privatize the garbage pickup, which Falk is against because “we should exhaust every possible avenue and we haven’t.” Falk said because Williams has been part of the current administration for two decades, residents can’t go along with the same and hope for different results. “We have an opportunity for change, we have an opportunity for better, we have an opportunity for new ideas and we have an opportunity to do it together,” Falk said. “I want to have a town hall where we are all part of the solution.”

Rich Williams - Republican

After winning a Republican Primary, longtime town planner Rich Williams has one more step to becoming supervisor in Patterson. With commercial growth a main campaign issue for both candidates, Williams believes he’s delivering on that. Recently, Williams has been working “with a number of developers” to bring commercial growth in the town. He stated there are four to five new buildings that could break ground in the spring and has been in communication with a developer that would build a new 22,500 square foot retail center up on Route 22. After that is done, the same developer would look at adjoining properties to build outlet centers that could result in a significant retail area. The buildings would be a combination of retail, office and warehouse space. Williams has also been working with the owners of Thunder Ridge Ski Area to expand their operation. He has stressed before how he’d like to see more tourism attraction in the town to draw visitors. Williams praised the town board for staying below the tax cap this budget, and as a result and Williams submitting the town’s efficiency plan to the state, residents can expect a rebate check back from the state next year. Williams said his stance on whether to privatize garbage collection has been the same since day one. While there are benefits to having municipal sanitation, the costs are significantly higher than surrounding towns that go with a private company. Williams wants to be given a year if elected to see if he can find a way to rein in the spending before considering a private company. “I think there are certain expenses that we can build efficiencies into,” he said. Another issue coming to the forefront is emergency services in the town. Because the fire department is having difficulties staffing the ambulances, the town must take charge, which could be pricy. Williams believes the solution is a voluntary ambulance corps. Where the town can “soft-bill,” taking what insurance companies will pay for dispatching that ambulance. He also stressed the town has tried to get better high-speed data, but to little avail. While his opponent has questioned how Williams can bring changes even though he’s been with the town for 20 years, the longtime resident scoffed at that notion. “We’re talking about an individual who has lived in town for 12 years now, and the total sum of his experience or participation in town government is he’s managed to attend five town board meetings,” Williams said. Williams believes the town has come a long way ever since he and current Supervisor Michael Griffin served the town starting in 1990, noting Patterson had a number of facilities built at a cost efficient manner. Williams said in his time, he’s collected more than $15 million in grant money, which has been used to construct new municipal buildings. “I’ve got the experience and the ability to do the job,” Williams said.
Oliverio, Annabi Fight for Putnam Valley Supervisor Seat

By David Propper

Two candidates are seeking the supervisor’s seat held currently by Bob Tendy.

Sam Oliverio - Democrat

After a failed bid for county executive last year, former legislator Sam Oliverio is back, running for supervisor because he thinks the town has neglected many things over the past few years and the result has been troublesome. “I feel the governance of the town, the supervision of the town is really not been on par with where it should be,” Oliverio said. Oliverio cited a pond at Lake Peekskill with where it should be, “ Oliverio said. Oliverio cited a pond at Lake Peekskill that is finally being cleaned out in an election year, Spur Beach still isn’t open, the business district has too many vacant store fronts and the unsafe condition of the Taconic overpass has yet to be solved. Finally, possibly breaking the tax cap for the second straight year is unacceptable, he stated. Oliverio said he believes quality of life entities in the town like the library, ambulance, fire department are all "under attack" pointing the finger at his opponent for trying to take necessary funding from all of those places. "Go with experience, go with somebody that knows the town, knows the people and knows the issues," Oliverio said. "It's time to stop lecturing people and it's time to get things done."

In order to control the budget, Oliverio had numerous points. He would strip health benefits of every elected official and possibly reduce elected officials' salaries. He would raise violation fines like excess junk cars on land and raise building permits. Finally, he would hold the line on any new town vehicles for now after the town bonded for trucks last year. Oliverio also discussed shared services and purchasing between the school and the town, guaranteeing a close relationship between the two that would save money since he has worked as an assistant principal at the high school for decades. As an 18-year legislator, Oliverio said he brought in the sheriff substation and senior center in town. Additionally, he said the county did major road improvement on his watch and also fought to preserve Peekskill Hollow Road when it was being threatened. He worked with the county on many other endeavors, all while collaborating with a Republican-majority legislature. Oliverio states he isn't tied to the political party that wants to “take control of the county of Putnam.” He vows to be an independent thinker and get things done. "I'm a person of my word, I'm a hard-worker and I don't talk nonsense," he said. "The bottom line is I have experience, I have governmental knowledge and I have a great work ethic and I will never let my town down."

Jackie Annabi - Republican

Annabi, a Republican, said. Annabi listed numerous achievements and initiatives: She started an oil cooperative after a failed bid for county executive last year, former legislator Sam Oliverio is back, running for supervisor because he thinks the town has neglected many things over the past few years and the result has been troublesome. "I want to fix problems," Annabi, a Republican, said. Annabi has been fighting for is holding the Putnam Valley Library fiscally accountable, especially when the library board of trustees tried to pass a Chapter 414 that would let voters decide on an increased library budget, a move that resulted in some dissent from residents, including Annabi. She said the town must stay on top of the fire department and ambulance corp. because while residents need these services, it has to be done frugally. Currently, Annabi is in another battle to get the budget under the state tax cap. Last year, she was the only councilmember to vote against going over the tax cap and vowed to do the same this year if it came to that. After getting the preliminary budget, she was able to work with departments across the board to get it around a little more than two percent. "I am not done," she said. "I am not willing to go over this tax cap." Annabi wants to work with the school district for shared services and purchasing like consolidating paper and water delivery from the same vendor. Other shared services should also be explored ranging from department to department, and to the town sharing with the county and state. Going into this election Annabi firmly believes residents don't want to hear excuses, but they want to see results. "I want to win this election by telling the truth and telling people what they need to hear, rather than win by lying and making promises, I know I can't keep,'” Annabi said. “Because after Election Day, I still have to face myself, my neighbors, our seniors, our veterans and every other Putnam Valley resident.”
Land Development in Southeast Centerpiece of Town Board Race

By David Propper

Four candidates seeking two board seats

Lynne Eckardt - Democrat

Incumbent Councilwoman Lynne Eckardt knows hard work is “essential for good government,” and in her first term on the Southeast Town Board, the Democrat believes she’s displayed that. Finding other ways to get funding for the town outside of taxes, working with various stakeholders to bring in the Diverting Reservoir Trail and working with the rest of the town board to balance the budget, especially with Supervisor Tony Hay, are all things the longtime resident can point to. One way the town got additional funding, is from land that was gifted to the town that Eckardt spearheaded. That land can now be sold in a couple years and is assessed for more than $600,000. She has worked to reach an agreement with Brewster school officials regarding emergency preparedness and worked with the board to bring solar panels to town property. On issues going forward, Eckardt said the town is facing failing roads and infrastructure and she believes the board will eventually have to float a bond to repair many of them. “We hear some scary numbers on it so maybe we should do a little at a time,” Eckardt said. “I don’t believe we should ever rezone to benefit a developer,” Eckardt stated. “Southeast gained so little with the Crossroads development.” Eckardt pointed out most of the money generated would go to other levels of government and the developer could have gotten most of what he wanted without the rezoning. One aspect of this year’s proposed budget that Eckardt is staunchly against is a raise for all elected officials of less than two percent. While she believes full-time elected officials (supervisor, clerk, highway superintendent) deserve more money, she doesn’t think councilmembers do. If elected for another term, Eckardt wants to advocate getting the theatre and old town hall in Brewster functional again, but doesn’t want taxpayers’ dollars used to do so. “I think I work really hard,” Eckardt said. “I understand the problems in Southeast and I understand some solutions that we can use.”

John Lord - Democrat

As John Lord has been campaigning, he’s been conveying to voters he wants to offer more of the residents’ voice in town government, something he feels is currently lacking in many cases. While his running mate Lynne Eckardt, and Republican Supervisor Tony Hay have voted in lockstep on issues, particularly zoning, Lord knows two votes isn’t enough. “It’d be a more balance situation on the town board;” Lord said if he were elected. Lord highlighted the controversial Crossroads 312 vote where the three Republican councilmembers voted for the zoning change that saw immense opposition. He believes in keeping with the Comprehensive Plan, rather than approving zoning changes that affect multiple parcels in town. And with a project so big like Crossroads, Lord suggests a voter referendum should have been done instead of just the town board taking a vote. Another example is the three councilmembers voting to have the town board, not the planning board, examine the Barrett Hill proposed zoning change, while Eckardt and Hay wanted the planning board to take the lead. “Development is something that we need, but it should be focused,” he said, adding there are many shuttered storefronts that should be brought back, rather than putting more shovels in the ground. One issue Lord wants to bring to the forefront is recreation for seniors or families seeking more programs and activities. He would like the town to promote some of the outdoor activities Southeast holds and send out a questionnaire about what residents would like. Lord wants to push the state for more funds for roads and infrastructure. “We will represent the wishes of the voters in all matters before the town,” Lord said. “I don’t believe critical to keep taxes at bay. Alvarez, an army veteran serving his first term, said when he joined the board four years ago, the town was in poor financial health, but by working closely with other town board members, he helped get the fund balance replenished to ensure the town remain solvent. Alvarez thinks the town has to be “open-minded” to development in the town. “There can definitely be a balance between development that will allow us to increase revenue and yet at the same time maintain the rural character of where we live,” Alvarez said. The top issue Alvarez said the town faces is keeping taxes reasonable even if outside expenses keep rising, which is where revenue is critical. He said when making decisions, he tries to think as a resident and what he would want and then goes from there on whether a project should be green-lighted. Alvarez said one way he’s helped the town save money is working with other town board members to attain solar panels for the town property to cut down on energy. Alvarez even had solar panels installed on his own home back in 2007. Alvarez said currently he is working on Opportunity Park with running mate Paul Jonke to make an open space welcoming to developmentally-disabled children in the town. “I think it’ll be a great asset to the town,” he said. “People are always asking for more recreation.” When it comes down to it, Alvarez wants to move the town in a strong direction. “My vision for that is to do it with new development, being able to compromise and have a healthy balance,” he said. “As (important) as it is to maintain our rural character, without growing business we have to shift the tax burden from the residents to the business owners and the only way to do that is get new business in there.”

Edwin Alvarez - Republican

Incumbent Councilman Edwin Alvarez has attracted some ire for his vote on approving the zoning change for the Crossroads 312 project, but the 20-year resident knows commercial growth is critical to keep taxes at bay. Alvarez, an army veteran serving his first term, said when he joined the board four years ago, the town was in poor financial health, but by working closely with other town board members, he helped get the fund balance replenished to ensure the town remain solvent. Alvarez thinks the town has to be “open-minded” to development in the town. “There can definitely be a balance between development that will allow us to increase revenue and yet at the same time maintain the rural character of where we live,” Alvarez said. The top issue Alvarez said the town faces is keeping taxes reasonable even if outside expenses keep rising, which is where revenue is critical. He said when making decisions, he tries to think as a resident and what he would want and then goes from there on whether a project should be green-lighted. Alvarez said one way he’s helped the town save money is working with other town board members to attain solar panels for the town property to cut down on energy. Alvarez even had solar panels installed on his own home back in 2007. Alvarez said currently he is working on Opportunity Park with running mate Paul Jonke to make an open space welcoming to developmentally-disabled children in the town. “I think it’ll be a great asset to the town,” he said. “People are always asking for more recreation.” When it comes down to it, Alvarez wants to move the town in a strong direction. “My vision for that is to do it with new development, being able to compromise and have a healthy balance,” he said. “As (important) as it is to maintain our rural character, without growing business we have to shift the tax burden from the residents to the business owners and the only way to do that is get new business in there.”

Paul Jonke - Republican

This might be his first time running for public office, but Paul Jonke believes his 27 years in the property tax arena has given him the background to understand the importance of growing the tax base to sustain “an affordable living environment in town.” Jonke, who is part of the Board of Directors for Hudson Valley Cerebral Palsy, has been active in the town for years, serving as the town’s tax assessor back in the 1990s. Jonke believes the town needs to work with developers to build “sustainable economic projects.” Jonke stressed, “When someone wants to invest their money in our community, we need to welcome them, we don’t need to discourage them.” If elected, Jonke wants to continue to work with others to put together a privately funded field for developmentally disabled children of all ages and disabilities, and wants to offer the board the expertise of his property tax knowledge. As the tax assessor in 1996, Jonke brought the Homestead Act to the town boards’ attention, which is a local option to established two separate tax rates; a lower rate for residential homeowners and a higher rate for other property owners.

Jonke said Supervisor Tony Hay is doing a “tremendous job” restoring the fund balance and offering lean budgets. “The decisions we make today that are going to affect our residents 20 years down the road, 50 years, 100 years down the road,” Jonke said. “Give people the most affordable town to live in Putnam County.” Jonke asserts there is a “clear difference” between him and Edwin Alvarez and their Democratic opponents. He claims, “they are discouraging all growth in our town, they’re discouraging all development in our town” while Jonke said he’s for “reasonable, sustainable commercial development.”
Heated Brewster Trustee Race Exposes Stark Differences

By David Propper
Four candidates seeking two village board seats

Teresa Stockburger

With the village in the middle of so much, Teresa Stockburger wants to see through that work until the end. As an incumbent, Stockburger, on three lines including the Republican, knows if residents are happy with the way she's contributing, they'll be ready to re-elect her for another two years. During her tenure, she's worked to beautify the village's main hub by having banners and flower baskets put up, and newer garbage cans put in place. Although Stockburger believes, to a certain extent, in term limits, she said when she first came on the board, the village was building the infrastructure that would change the village, but "change is coming very slow." Working with a new comprehensive plan and developer through the winter, Stockburger said she wants to be a voice for everyone and stated the village needs to be inclusive of all population on Main Street. "I want to see change, I want to see vibrancy, but I don't know what's that going to do to the people are already there," Stockburger said. "And I want to be there to protect their interests, too." She argued she's the only trustee that firmly supports Main Street and goes to several different businesses in the area multiple times a week. "Others on the board are just going to (village hall)," Stockburger said. "That kind of disturbs me. You have the culture of Main Street and then you have the hill." She said to draw a younger population, the village should make apartment housing available with amenities inside of it because "we don't have anything here like that." Overall, Stockburger stated she has the experience to keep the village going forward. "I feel like I'm there, I know where we've been and what we're working toward," Stockburger said.

Christine Piccini

As the revitalization plan for the village goes ahead, Christine Piccini, running on the Best for Brewster line, has been stressing to voters her critical participation in the plan to transform the village. "How much the work has fallen on my shoulders, how much of the process has been a result of my efforts," Piccini said, noting running mate George Gaspar has worked with her and noted her commitment to the village. She was on the PTA and on school board committees. She then became a planning board member, eventually becoming chairperson before getting elected as a trustee. "It is my commitment to stay here until the cows come home," Piccini said. "This is home. My heart is here."

Erin Meagher

She ran two years ago, but with three lines (including Republican) next to her name this time, Erin Meagher is looking to lend a younger voice in the village. Meagher doesn't think the upkeep around the village is adequate, especially commuter parking facilities, sidewalks, and infrastructure throughout Brewster.

George Gaspar

George Gaspar, running on the Best for Brewster line, believes the village is moving forward into the 21st century and wants to be part of the progress he sees occurring. As a licensed architect who has sat on the village's Comprehensive Plan Committee, Gaspar wants to see that plan implemented "to its fullest extent and it doesn't get water downed in any way." Also on the village planning board, the longtime Putnam County resident said the village is in a "stagnant move" and wants to be part of the team that pushes past that. Other issues Gaspar said needs addressing is bulk pickup where village officials decided to let residents choose when bulk pickup should occur rather than set times, a move that Gaspar is "totally against." Materials can be on the side of the road for an extended period of time, Gaspar noted. Bicycles on the sidewalk also need to be addressed.
Democrat Attempts to Toss One Republican Off Board

By Arthur Cusano

Two incumbent Republicans are seeking re-election to Putnam Valley Town Board, while a Democrat looks to bump one of them off.

Steve Mackay - Incumbent

Steve Mackay was elected to the town board in 2011. The retired U.S. Postmaster currently teaches aquatics at Peekskill Middle School and works as the aquatics director for camp Floridan in the summer. He is running on the Republican, Independent and Conservative lines. Mackay said he and his wife, former Putnam Valley Board of Education President Tina Mackay, were strong believers in public service. He said he was motivated to serve on the town board four years ago after 42 years as a resident to try and help the town more business friendly and bring new business to the Oregon Corners business district.

"We think we have a plan in place that will excite developers," Mackay said. "The county’s been working with us, as have some of the real estate agents, and there are some great potential things that are going to break very shortly." Mackay stressed that increasing the commercial tax base of the town was necessary to help stay under the state property tax cap. "The tax cap is tough, but we need to do our part to stay within those confines if we possibly can," he said. Mackay said he was also enthusiastic about the planned changes to the Pudding Street intersection that residents have been requesting for years. Contracts for the design for the new Pudding Street bridge are due to be sent out next year, he said.

Louie Luongo - Incumbent

Louie Luongo is seeking his first full four-year term after being elected in 2013 after running unopposed for an open seat. He is running on the Republican, Independence, Conservative and Reform party lines. Luongo, a Metro North machinist by trade, said he wants to continue working to help move the town forward and said the board is looking into different plans to help save tax dollars.

"We’re trying to use our tax dollars wisely, so we don’t have to go over the cap, or have a restrictive fund balance," he said. The 35-year town resident said he first started coming to the town when his family opened a coffee shop in the Oregon Corners district in 1978. Luongo is a current deputy fire chief and former chief for the Putnam Valley Fire Department and is a life member and former board chairman of the Putnam Valley Ambulance Corps. He said he pursued elected office as another way to serve his neighbors. "I thought it was another step towards servicing the community," Luongo said. "We have a great community and I want it to be the best it can be." Luongo said he wanted to see help the towns tax base by revitalizing the Oregon Corners district. "We need to increase businesses in the town so that our people don’t have to run out to Route 6 or Mahopac for small shopping items," Luongo said. "When we lost Oregon Hardware we lost a great asset to our town, so I’d like to see something come back."

Cathy Hanson - Challenger

Cathy Hanson is running as a Democrat for the town board and also has the Women’s Equality party line. Hanson said she wanted to see the comprehensive plan adopted in 2007 start to be implemented. "If we want to plan Putnam Valley’s future, what we need is a plan," she said. Hanson said the town needed to think outside the box on how to reduce taxes and pay for things the town needs, and needed to get residents more involved in a bipartisan fashion to find new solutions. Hanson was a high school English teacher in Washington State, and later worked as a district advisor for the Girls Scouts of the USA in Seattle before becoming an education design specialist who helped design educational programs for the Girls Scouts of the USA’s national office in New York City. She later worked for 20 years in various positions in IBM in Washington and New York, including sales representative, marketing manager and regional manager. Hanson, a town resident for 14 years, served for 10 years on the Roaring Brook Lake Property Owner’s Association, including four years as president. She said she enjoyed working with town officials during that time and said she became fascinated with the process and more interested in holding public office. "I will be visible, I will be on the job and I will be accessible," Hanson said. "People already have my phone number, my email address and my Facebook page, and I’m listening and making notes. If I’m elected, I’ll be working for them.”
Four Candidates Run for Two Kent Town Board Seats

By Neal Rentz
Two Democrats and two Republicans are vying for two council seats on the Kent Town Board.

Scott Chin - Republican
Scott Chin said he has a passion for the town. "I have been a nine-year resident of Kent to find some peace and improved quality of life," he said. "I absolutely love living up here because of the pristine neighborhoods that offer safety, comfort and a peace of mind to all families." If elected, Chin said he would have an opportunity to contribute to the community in making Kent an even better place to live, adding "Kent has been missing a local area with small businesses that allow for local gathering and recirculation of income back into our own community. In essence, this can create a 'heartbeat' for the Town of Kent. Chin said he would seek to attract businesses to Kent. "The town government is facing a big challenge in attracting potential businesses, he's said. "Determining availability and capacity of use for potential commercial property is imperative in order to regulate the types of businesses the town desires and can manage. We must also work closely with potential entrepreneurs and available resources as well as identifying incentives." Chin said he would seek to publicize recreation programs that are provided in town. "The current Kent recreation programs are very useful as it provides a means for our young children to be involved in a variety of activities which help in their development during their younger years," he said. Chin said no new government programs were needed in the town and all existing services provided by the town of Kent remain.

Jaime McGlasson - Republican
Jaime McGlasson said she was running to maintain the quality of life in Kent. "I made the decision to run because the town of Kent is a beautiful place to live and I want to do my part in making sure it stays that way for generations to come," she said. "Bringing responsible economic growth to the town, expanding the recreation department, as well as making sure that the beautification of Kent continues are just a few of the things that I would like to do if I am elected to the board. As a lifelong resident I am tired of hearing the town of Kent can't and want to change the way fellow residents feel about our town." McGlasson said she would work to attract new businesses to Kent. "The town needs to figure out what type of businesses can feasibly come to the town and thrive, then work with the planning board to find incentives to offer to them," she said. "While this may be a difficult task, with fresh ideas and unity I think that this is a feasible task." McGlasson said she would seek to improve the recreation department's programs. "The recreation department while adequate could be reviewed and revamped to attract greater resident participation and better allocation of resources. I believe that this could be accomplished while maintaining the current budget," she said. McGlasson said the town did not need to provide new services and should consider reducing its workforce.

Dale Cusack - Democrat
Dale Cusack said running for the town board is a continuation of his commitment to the public. "I served my country when it needed me and have been serving various state and local governments throughout my career in information technology and project management," he said. "I felt this was the right time to give back to our local government and help our town continue to forward progress begun by (Supervisor) Maureen Fleming." Cusack said to attract new businesses to Kent the town should look for public/private partnerships to build viable facilities for new business and our citizens and help our returning veterans make use of the loans and grants available for them to start new businesses. "Attracting more businesses, additional local tax revenue would be generated for services," Cusack said. "Under the current budget the services are what can be provided and do need to be improved," he said. "By attracting new business and increasing the tax base it will allow the town to provide the needed additional services without increasing taxes on our citizens." Cusack added, "I do not have specifics, but the town is participating in a countywide program to apply for available grants and subsidies to aid in adding or improving services." Cusack said he believes Fleming has shown "careful and diligent examination of what is being spent," and he wants to continue to examine where money can be saved.

Nancy Sorbella - Democrat
Nancy Sorbella touted her union support. "I am the only all-labor endorsed candidate for town board," she said, adding she had the support of the Westchester Putnam Central Labor Body AFL-CIO, Building Trades Council of Westchester and Putnam, AFL-CIO, and LIUNA Local #60, along with incumbent town supervisor Maureen Fleming. She said she's running for town board because "I like the direction that the supervisor and her administration have the town going in; with no tax increases, looking at everything through a clear lens and opening up our government for the most resident participation ever," Sorbella said, noting her experience as a businesswoman, volunteer board member on numerous boards, and as a parent and an entrepreneur. Sorbella said there are opportunities to encourage businesses to come to Kent. The town should explore "what we have in terms of businesses and then look at what is missing," she said. There should be "town hall meetings to get an understanding of what people want, what has worked, what hasn't," she said. "We have a corridor on Route 52 that is in need of redevelopment and there are grants and innovative funding possibilities depending upon the direction we as a town feel makes the most sense to go in. She vowed to be an "ambassador" for the town and advocate wherever possible for new, relevant and sustainable businesses that the entire community would be able to support. Sorbella said the town recreation center should be revitalized. "My vision is to look at some of the properties that the town currently owns as potential locations for a rec. center where there is something for everyone: seniors, daycare set, athletes, the handicapped, etc.," she said. "I would personally love a pool, a social center and a handicapped-accessible playground. She would explore grants and fundraising to make it possible."
Two Democrats Hope to Return to Philipstown Board

By David Propper

Three candidates are seeking two town board seats.

Nancy Montgomery - Democratic Incumbent

As Nancy Montgomery enters this year’s election, she’s doing so with a new perspective, citing the loss of her husband, Jim Lovell in the tragic 2013 MTA crash in the Bronx. In a previous interview, she pointed out her commitment to public safety and infrastructure as critical to the town. Land use decisions, Montgomery noted during a recent candidates forum hosted by philipstown.info, is also important, where the town needs to find a good balance between business and “why we all live here.” As someone who has been an EMT, Montgomery said during the candidates’ forum she’s looked into what is “happening with our fire departments and our ambulance corp.” for years. She has said with tourism rising in the area, emergency services have become more important. Consolidation of the court, fire and emergency services and building departments, Montgomery said, are all issues she wants to bring to the forefront. Specifically with the fire department, she wants to force conversations where the fire departments talk with each other more and discusses things like possibly purchasing from the same vendor “We’ve been talking about all of this for a long time,” Montgomery said of consolidation in an interview in August. “This term, I want to make it happen.” She suggested looking into shared services with neighboring county Dutchess or neighboring towns like Beacon. She stressed the importance of listening to everyone. “I feel that I represent all the people,” Montgomery said during the forum. “I would never think that I’m just serving Democrats.”

Bob Flaherty - Democratic Incumbent

A lifelong resident of Philipstown, Bob Flaherty said since he was appointed to the board in May, he’s done a good job of getting up to speed. Now, he wants a full term to continue that work. “I believe I have the qualities to serve the town of Philipstown,” he said during a philipstown.info forum. Weekly, Flaherty said he has met with constituents to assist with individual problems or concerns. “I’m very involved and I make sure I follow through with issues that come up,” Flaherty said during an August interview. When addressing shared services, Flaherty said he’d like to continue ongoing discussions with the Village of Nelsonville and “there’s definitely a chance to do a lot of consolidation” like the courts and highway services. One important issue to Flaherty said would be improving town hall and making it handicapped accessible by adding an elevator. Another issue is keeping the budget as tight as possible, always looking for savings. Previously, Flaherty had mentioned the proposed expansion of the Garrison Café, turning the Garrison Fire Department into a district (which will occur in January) and the drug epidemic that has hit Philipstown. He touted himself as a “straight-forward” lawmaker.

Craig Watters - Republican Challenger

In running for town board, Craig Watters, the lone candidate on the Republican line in the race, is seeking better balance with the all-Democratic board. “I feel the other 7,400 folks should have equal representation,” Watters said, referring to residents that aren’t Democrats. An example of group thinking on the board, he noted, was the proposed mass gathering law that would have had “unintended consequences.” The changes to the mass gathering ordinance include several different burdensome requirements on a resident’s private property that have never been a problem in town before, he previously said in an interview. “Healthy debate and civil discourse is what makes good government and that’s what I stand for,” he said. Watters also wants to see a better relationship with the county government. With all the money that’s sent to county in sales and property tax, Watters believes there is ways to get better services for the town. “We need someone to go fight for Philipstown,” Watters said during a philipstown.info debate. Watters thinks the business climate in town isn’t as friendly as it should be. While Beacon to the north and Peekskill to the south are vibrant, Watters believes the town needs to think regionally with those communities. “We are the jewel of the Hudson Highlands and we need to get a bigger piece,” he said. He did say he didn’t want to sacrifice the character of the town though to improve the business setting.

Craig Watters
With PV Clerk Retiring, Howard and Hayes Hope to Fill Seat

By Ray Gallagher and David Propper

Two candidates look to serve as Putnam Valley Town Clerk as the current clerk steps away.

Sherry Howard - Democrat

After 17 years as the Senior Clerk or Clerk in the Putnam Valley Parks & Recreation Department, where she’s also served as the Director of the town’s popular Sunset Concert Series, Sherry Howard is running as the Democratic candidate for Putnam Valley Town Clerk. “Putnam Valley is my home and has been for the last 35 years, it’s where my heart and soul is,” said Howard, who also worked in the Putnam Valley Central School District for four years prior to Parks & Recreation. Howard started as the recreation department Clerk and Administrative Assistant for 10 years before passing the Civil Service test Senior Clerk, which she has been the last seven years. “In these 17 years, I have gotten to know the rhythm of the community and the wonderful people who live here,” said Howard, who holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the City University of New York’s Hunter College. As the Senior Clerk in the Parks and Recreation Department, Howard has worked closely with the current Town Clerk – Eileen Royael – and her office, and has a thorough understanding of the expectations of the position. “In fact, my current position requires me to complete many similar tasks,” Howard said; “such as accurate record keeping, taking and transcribing minutes from meetings, receiving and balancing monies, knowledge of and experience with both the budget and bidding processes, scheduling meetings and generally assisting the community with whatever needs they have.” Howard believes her strengths lie in the fact that the Town Clerk’s position is more than just the tax collector and record keeper; the position often serves as a resident’s initial contact when venturing into town government. “She is often times the first person newcomers meet, and the first person residents go to when they have a problem or an issue that needs to be addressed,” Howard said. As the current president of the Putnam Valley Historical Society, Howard is well versed in the town’s eclectic history. Howard was also the driving force behind the research and implementation Putnam Valley’s Lucky Dog Park. She has also served as the volunteer liaison between the Town of Putnam Valley and Continental Village.

Ellen Hayes - Republican

When incumbent clerk Eileen Royael confirmed she was set to retire after her term ended this year, Republican candidate Ellen Hayes said she believed it was time for a new challenge after working for a non-profit for eight years. “It’s a natural progression for me,” Hayes said. She stressed experience matters and her past legal background as an executive legal secretary, office manager, and supervisor for 20 years is a huge advantage going into the position. With those qualifications and an “abundance of common sense,” Hayes knows she’d be an asset to the town. “With over 234 Town Laws that are dealt with on a daily basis by our residents, Town Board and other agencies,” Hayes said. “It will be a huge benefit to have the extensive legal background and understanding that I have of how to explain and interpret these laws as needed.” Hayes is currently a volunteer member of the Putnam Valley Central School District’s Citizen’s Advisory Committee and the Audit Committee. Both committee purposes are to enhance our children’s education. In addition, she is currently the acting Vice President of the reorganization committee of the Putnam Valley Chamber of Commerce now known as the Putnam Valley Business Network. One idea she has for the clerk’s office is streamlining and digitizing town records into an archive so it’s easy and accessible for residents to find past records. While Hayes was complimentary of the current clerk’s office, she noted a new clerk could always examine the office and find ways to improve it. “I haven’t heard really any complaints about the office so I think that’s a really good sign that our current town clerk has been doing the right thing for our residents,” Hayes said. Hayes wants voters to turn to her because she knows experience matters and she has the skills to perform the job diligently. “I pledge to provide the residents and Town Board with a well-organized office, keeping accurate records and information accessible in a cost-efficient and effective manner,” she said. “The town government is about making your lives easier, and this community better. I want to be a part of that.”
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