

# DEMOCRATICALLY SPEAKING

## A SOUTHEAST DEMOCRATIC NEWSLETTER

FALL 2016

As a resident of Southeast and Putnam County there's a lot going on that you should know about. There are several projects on the horizon that will cost more of your hard earned tax dollars yet there's not a solid business plan to show what returns can be expected on the county's investments.



### IN SOUTHEAST:

#### BARRETT HILL:

Barrett Hill is a 168-unit rental development located on Mt. Ebo Road North near the Brewster Post office.

In 2006 Barrett Hill was rezoned for a 168-units of owner-occupied Senior Housing (the property had been commercially zoned). Now the same developer, Harold Lepler, is in front of the Town Board petitioning for a zoning change that will allow 168 rental units with 17 units designated as affordable. Units will be set aside for Priority groups. Priority groups include: Employees of local school districts, town employees, volunteer firefighters, EMS workers, seniors, veterans and the disabled.

#### Why Should this Matter to You?

The requested zoning change will allow all age groups in Barrett Ridge thus adding school children. Since our school taxes are the bulk (almost 80% ) of our property tax bill more students mean higher costs for Southeast residents. Without state aid students cost about \$25,000 a year to educate. With state aid this cost falls to slightly more than \$16,000.

Using the Rutgers' formula the developer's Environmental Impact Statement estimates that only 26 public school students will result. Yet the 'Bridleside' affordable housing development in North Salem was supposed to add only 21 new students to the North Salem District and as of late-August there were actually 41- almost double the original estimate.

#### How and why this will affect Southeast?

Taxpayers, landlords, the Brewster School District and rental values may all be impacted. The change in zoning might also affect property values (especially condominiums) and add to local traffic. In addition, the zoning may be considered 'discriminatory' as only two of the aforementioned 'priority' groups are protected classes, thus the town could face litigation. Finally, our comprehensive plan update, adopted only two years ago, recommended Mt. Ebo as a suitable area for

senior housing. Barrett Hill may be a very profitable deal for the developer but it's a raw deal for Southeast taxpayers.

**Where Barrett Hill stands now:**

It appears that the rezoning will pass with Councilpersons, Alvarez, Cullen and Hudak in favor. Eckardt and Hay stand opposed.

There is one more Public Hearing slated for Barrett Hill. At this meeting the public will have input on occupancy, square footage, recreation fees and any other recommendations made by the Southeast Planning Board. The proposed square footage and corresponding occupancy rates are as follows:

	Square Footage:	Occupancy Maximum:
Studio:	450	2
1 Bedroom:	675	3
2 Bedroom:	750	5

Obviously the higher the allowed occupancy the more students may be added to the Brewster Central School District. While unlikely, if the maximum number of tenants is approved there could be as many as 712 tenants residing at Barrett Hill. The Public Hearing is Thursday, September 22nd at 7:00 PM, 1360 Route 22.

**DIVERTING RESERVOIR TRAIL:**

One great reason to live in Southeast is its beauty. Five reservoirs, rolling hills, natural wetlands, forests and fields dot the landscape. There are many excellent spots to hike. One of our newest hikes has already become a favorite and is a stone's throw from the Village of Brewster.

Spearheaded by Councilwoman Lynne Eckardt, the Diverting Reservoir Trail is Southeast's first cooperative effort with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the Putnam County Land Trust and local good governance group, Concerned Residents of Southeast. CRSE members have volunteered to be stewards of the Diverting Trail, an essential part of a safe and healthy trail.

The Diverting Reservoir trail runs parallel to the reservoir of the same name. The trail sits just south of the Village in between the Metro North tracks and the Diverting Reservoir. The walk is easy to access from Railroad Avenue (across the road from the gazebo- you'll find a kiosk) and meanders almost a mile along the water's edge.

**SOUTHEAST TOWN WEBSITE:**

Thanks to a dedicated committee of Southeast employees, Councilwoman Eckardt and Supervisor Hay, the town has a new cleaner, clearer website. While serviceable, the old website had become cluttered and more difficult to navigate. The new website has a terrific 'Search' bar and also works well on mobile devices. The address for the new website is:

<http://www.townofsoutheast-ny.com/>

Check it out!

## **IMPORTANT ISSUES AROUND PUTNAM COUNTY:**

### **PHILIPSTOWN/COLD SPRING SENIOR CENTER:**

This complete boondoggle is going to cost county taxpayers \$4 million over 15 years without any real property to show for it. This is the project that was to be named for Roger Ailes. After public outcry and Ailes withdrawing his gift of \$500,000 this is no longer the case.

Putnam County will be renovating the Lahey Pavillion in Cold Spring yet does not own the building. The bonding amount is estimated at \$800,00 and some of the costs include the renovation of 6000 square feet. Renovation estimates include a \$200,000 kitchen, \$100,000 in bathroom fixtures, \$45,000 for fans and other fixtures and \$25,000 for a gas fireplace with glass doors.

Why should you care?

We all want to take care of our seniors- that's a given. What we don't want are extravagant projects that end up raising our taxes and consequently drive these same seniors to relocate to less expensive states. If the Cold Spring Senior Center is built, we will be spending over \$4 million a year on our four Putnam Senior Centers. The four centers are located in: Carmel, Mahopac, Putnam Valley and Philipstown. Putnam County underwrites expenses on Senior Centers across Putnam County but does not fund senior programs in Southeast. Southeast is the economic engine of Putnam County yet we do not share in sales tax revenue nor does Southeast receive County funding for our seniors.

Legislators Roger Gross (Southeast), Dini Lobue (Mahopac) and Kevin Wright (Carmel/Mahopac) are the only Legislators questioning the wisdom of leasing this real estate. Southeast Legislator Castellano supports the project wholeheartedly.

### **COUNTY CELL TOWERS:**

First there was the transparency problem.

Four to-be-built cell towers were on the July 19<sup>th</sup> county agenda as: 'Lease Approval and Monroe Balancing Test for a Wireless Communication Facility'. Thus residents directly affected by the towers' proposed locations would have been hard-pressed to understand what exactly was being proposed. One cell tower location was planned next to the Putnam Valley Senior Center. Another is proposed at the County owned golf club in Mahopac (next to several residential neighborhoods). The Southeast proposal (29 Milan Road) proposed at the Kern Building parking lot where the DMV and Putnam County Board of Health are located. This antenna is slated to be 180 feet (our current code allows up to 120 feet). Unfortunately, we don't know much more than this because Putnam County Executive Odell and our Putnam County Legislators did almost no outreach to the towns involved.

In fact, Putnam County was slated to give a presentation at the Southeast Town Board meeting on September 8<sup>th</sup> but, even after a reminder was sent, the County did not show up. It's important to know who is going to pay for the towers (there is mention of grant money) and what the county will make on co-locations with mobile companies. While the county will exceed Southeast's current height limit by one third there has been no talk of sharing income from possible co-location rentals.

The cell towers have been billed as a safety issue. Of course safety is paramount but the question remains: Can these towers be built on property that will directly affect nearby town residents and employees who will work directly under these antennae.

Thanks to Legislator Kevin Wright the County will now make a concerted effort to make agendas clear and transparent. Legislator Lobue was concerned about the Mahopac tower however Legislators Gross and Castellano (representing Southeast) do not seem concerned or even interested in this project.

**YOUR ELECTED DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATIVE IN SOUTHEAST:**

Lynne Eckardt- Councilwoman

E-Mail Address: [lynne.eckardt@gmail.com](mailto:lynne.eckardt@gmail.com)

Cell Phone: 845 661-6349

**YOUR SOUTHEAST DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE:**

We are so fortunate to have an enthusiastic, dedicated and active Southeast Democratic Committee. If you'd like to get more politically involved on the local, state or federal level please check out our Website: <http://www.southeastdemocrats.org/>

Or our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Southeast-NY-Democrats-169075806485765/>

And think about joining us- we'd love to have you!

**2016 CANDIDATES:**

We have some terrific candidates in Putnam County. While the presidential election is what will get you to the polls in November please take an extra minute to vote a straight Row A ticket!

**New York State 40th Senate District: Alison Boak**

Fresh off a Primary which Ali won with ease, she now faces Terrence Murphy. Ali's website is:

<https://boak4ny.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/boak4ny/>

**New York State Assembly 94<sup>th</sup> District: Brian Higbie**

Brian is an attorney residing in Yorktown. He is facing Kevin Byrne in the General election.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Higbie4NY/?fref=ts>

**Putnam County Court Judge: Judge Gina Capone**

Gina has been a town judge in Putnam Valley for 15 years and an attorney since 1997. Gina is a capable and fair Town Justice who will bring innovation and oversight to the County Court. Gina's website is:

<http://capone4countycourt.com/>

**Putnam County Legislature: Southeast District 6 Jen Cassidy:**

Jen is running as a fiscally responsible, transparent and accountable candidate. She will be a welcome addition to a one party Legislature that votes almost entirely in lockstep with County Executive Odell.

Contact: [ElectJenCassidy@gmail.com](mailto:ElectJenCassidy@gmail.com)

**Don't forget to vote on Tuesday November 8<sup>th</sup>!**

Polls will be open from 6:00 AM until 9:00 PM