

ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

TRACEY A. BARTELS, Chairwoman
DAVID B. DONALDSON, Vice Chairman
JONATHAN R. HEPPNER, Majority Leader
KENNETH J. RONK, JR., Minority Leader
VICTORIA A. FABELLA, Clerk



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MINUTES

NOVEMBER 12, 2019

PUBLIC HEARINGS

6:00 PM

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRWOMAN: 6:00 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: Led by Chairwoman Tracey A. Bartels.

MOMENT OF SILENT MEDITATION:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIRE EVACUATION PLAN

PLEASE NOTE THAT IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS REQUESTED THAT LEGISLATORS AND ALL OTHERS MOVE AT LEAST ONE BLOCK AWAY FROM THE COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING IN ORDER NOT TO IMPEDE THE FIREFIGHTERS IN THEIR DUTIES

CELL PHONES

Please silence cell phones for the duration of the Public Hearings.

ROLL CALL: Present: 17 Absent: 6 (Legislators Eckert, Fabiano, Petit, Rodriguez, Woltman, Wawro)

Note: Legislator Wawro arrived at 6:04 PM

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6:03 PM - CALL OF THE 1ST PUBLIC HEARING: On the Proposed 2020 Ulster County Budget and the Proposed 2020 – 2025 Capital Program

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no speakers signed up for public comment.

Motion by Legislator Litts second by Legislator Donaldson to adjourn the public hearing. All in favor.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED: 6:04 PM

6:05 PM - CALL OF THE 2ND PUBLIC HEARING: In accordance with Article 2, Section 202 of the New York State Eminent Domain Procedure Law ("EDPL") on a Proposed Public Project (PIN 8761.82) to construct the Ulster County Midtown Linear Park

Ulster County Department of Planning Deputy Director Chris White provided an overview of eminent domain procedure law terms and conditions along with the project overview. Robert Cook of the law firm Cook, Netter, Cloonan, Kurtz & Murphy, PC spoke briefly regarding the acquisitions.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were (2) speakers signed up for public comment.

1. Ted Griese, Kingston: Mr. Griese, Operations Manager for the Kingston Land Trust spoke in support of the development of the Kingston Midtown Lineal Park.
2. Kevin Smith: Mr. Smith when called upon elected not to speak.

Motion by Legislator Litts second by Legislator Donaldson to adjourn the public hearing. All in favor.

Please Note: Complete content of the public comment period can be heard on the Ulster County Legislative Website.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED: 6:17 PM

6:17 PM - CALL OF THE 3RD PUBLIC HEARING: On Proposed Local Law No. 10 Of 2019, A Local Law Regarding Campaign Finance Reform in Ulster County

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were 14 speakers signed up for public comment. There were 34 verbal and written comments filed with the UC Legislative Clerk in opposition to Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.

1. Henry Bartosik, Wawarsing: Mr. Bartosik was not in attendance when called upon to speak.
2. Cynthia Wagner, Wawarsing: Ms. Wagner opposes Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
3. Sam Kniffen, New Paltz: Mr. Kniffen opposes Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
4. Janet Knott, High Falls: Ms. Knot 29-year county employee and current Ulster County CSEA President spoke in opposition to Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
5. Todd Schmidt, Town of Ulster: Mr. Schmidt, CSEA Local 856 President, CSEA Region 3 Political Action Chair and Vice President, spoke in opposition to Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
6. Tom Denton, New Paltz: Mr. Denton spoke in support of Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
7. Attilio Contini, Rosendale: Mr. Contini opposes Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
8. Howard Baul, Wawarsing: Mr. Baul opposes Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
9. Cynthia Bell, Town of Ulster: Ms. Bell, President of League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region, and participant on the proposed law subcommittee spoke in support of campaign finance reform.
10. Thomas Maerling, Wawarsing: Mr. Maerling opposes Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.
11. Penny Coleman, Rosendale: Ms. Coleman spoke in support of Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.

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12. Ellisa Tucci, Woodstock: Ms. Tucci spoke in support of Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.

13. Todd Wolgamuth, Woodstock: Mr. Wolgamuth spoke in support of Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.

14. Gai Galitzine, Kingston: Ms. Galitzine spoke in support of Proposed Local Law No. 10 of 2019.

Motion by Legislator Litts second by Legislator Donaldson to adjourn the public hearing. All in favor.

Please Note: Complete content of the public comment period can be heard on the Ulster County Legislative Website.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED: 6:49 PM

6:50 PM - **CALL OF THE 4th PUBLIC HEARING:** Ulster County Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) Administered By The New York State Homes And Community Renewal Ulster County Homeownership Program

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no speakers signed up for public comment.

Motion by Legislator Litts second by Legislator Donaldson to adjourn the public hearing. All in favor.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED: 6:50 PM

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NEXT MEETING:

There are two additional Public Hearings on the Proposed 2020 Ulster County Budget and the Proposed 2020 – 2025 Capital Program scheduled for:

- Tomorrow Night – Wednesday, November 13, 2019 – Woodstock Community Center, 56 Rock City Rd., Woodstock, New York, 12498 at 6:00 PM
- Thursday, November 14, 2019 – Lloyd Town Hall, 12 Church Street, Highland, New York, 12528 at 6:00 PM

The next Regular Meeting of the Ulster County Legislature will be held on November 19, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the Legislative Chambers, Sixth Floor, Ulster County Office Building, 244 Fair Street, Kingston, New York.

November 12, 2019

To: Legislators and Executive of Ulster County, New York

Re: Proposed Law #10 of 2019, Comprehensive Campaign Finance Reform

Dear Legislators and Executive Ryan,

The "Legislative Findings" section of the proposed law cites its need asserting two points: "Large political contributions may raise concerns on the part of taxpayers and residents regarding undue influence", and "It is important for, and incumbent upon, elected officials to foster public confidence in governmental operations by preventing any actual, or even the perception of, corruption." I would also point out that small donor matching programs like that called for in this law create opportunities for members of our communities to campaign for public office even if they don't have a lot of money or wealthy donors. The diversity of a community should be reflected in its representation, and small donor matching can help accomplish that.

I attended most sub-committee meetings crafting this law and I recognize that there are concerns from some regarding the cost to taxpayers, and, being a taxpayer, I did some calculations on what those costs would look like. The population numbers and hence the costs vary slightly depending on how one defines a "taxpayer", although we are all constituents.

I looked at three ways to define "taxpayer"; adult over 18, household, and Ulster County tax parcel and calculated the cost for each. I took the number of adults over 18 (139,620) and the number of households (69,662) from the US Census figures and I used the Ulster County Real Property Tax Service Agency's statistic for the number of "tax parcels" in Ulster County (87,000). I then used the amount to be appropriated for the campaign financing for 2020 (\$75,000) and future county-wide election years suggested maximum appropriation (\$220,000) from the draft of the law itself.

I should note here that during the drafting of this law, there were discussions regarding the cost of adding the two clerical employees to the BOE, but given that the BOE has been requesting two additional employees for a couple of years, that they are already needed and can perform the necessary additional clerical work during election years as well, the costs associated with their employment should not be tagged to only this legislation (and in the future the time they spend on campaign finance can be more accurately determined).

The Calculations:

In 2020:

$\$75,000 / 139,620 = \0.5317 ----- **53 cents -per Adult**
 $\$75,000 / 69,662 = \1.0766 ----- **\$1.08 -per Household**
 $\$75,000 / 87,000 = \0.8620 ----- **86 cents -per Ulster County Tax Parcel**

In Future County-Wide Election years:

$\$210,000 / 139,620 = \1.5040 ----- **\$1.50 -per Adult**
 $\$210,000 / 69,996 = \3.0145 ----- **\$3.01 -per Household**
 $\$210,000 / 87,000 = \2.4137 ----- **\$2.41 -per Ulster County Tax Parcel**

I think it is really disingenuous of a legislator to act as though financing their campaigns using big money donors and conventional fundraising with all the influence peddling it is famous for is fair to their constituents and public financing that would cost less than a cup of coffee in a year and keep the representatives beholden only to the public is somehow less fair! I believe if legislators are honest with their constituents regarding these costs and benefits, they will get wholehearted support for this law.

One entity that opposes this law, the CSEA (and presumably other unions), explains their opposition to it as being unfair to them since the County references taxpayer cost when negotiating contracts with the union. Presumably, the argument goes that if cost to the taxpayer is important, then it must be a deciding factor in any legislation which would represent such a cost. Regardless the actual miniscule costs we're considering, my question is how many other laws have they opposed on that basis? Does the CSEA oppose any legislation that presents a cost to taxpayers or just campaign finance reform? Another argument I heard from the CSEA at the last legislative session was that New York State is already drafting campaign finance reform legislation and if that is different than the county law, the county risks a challenge or lawsuit from the state. This I find incredibly disingenuous given the fact that the CSEA and the AFL-CIO and other unions are strenuously opposing the legislation at the state level as well. Why would the unions oppose public and fair campaign finance laws? Members of this body must already know the real reason. The unions spend millions of dollars per election cycle to influence elections and those who are elected. They benefit from the system as it is and don't want it changed.

One of the most vocal labor unions opposing public financing is the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA). "We have way too many needs to be dedicating up to \$100 million (State program supposed cost) to pay for politicians to run for office," Fran Turner, the group's director of legislative and political action, said. The CSEA has donated more than \$400,000 to state politicians' campaigns since the start of 2018.

According to the NY Times, (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/29/nyregion/unions-public-financing-elections.html>) : "The New York A.F.L.-C.I.O. and its affiliates have spent more than \$3.9 million since the start of 2018 on state and local elections. The Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee alone took in more than \$1.6 million from unions last cycle, or nearly half of its total haul". "Unions have contributed at least \$159,000, or about 40 percent, of donations to the political action committee of the Assembly speaker, Carl E. Heastie, since the start of 2018. They have also given more than \$234,000 to the campaign account of the Senate majority leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, in the same period — about 30 percent of her donations."

Nationwide, labor poured more than \$217 million into the 2016 races. Almost 90 percent of those contributions went to Democrats, which is consistent with at least two decades of labor contribution trends. Michael Mulgrew, the president of the United Federation of Teachers said that his union's donations counteract the influence of right-leaning groups: "If we're not there, then it would be slanted in a direction that is much different than the unions". Joseph Geiger, executive secretary-treasurer of the New York City District Council of Carpenters, said "It (public campaign financing) is not a priority". His union spent \$750,000 on campaigns last year, records showed.

Now, let me be clear, I am a lifelong supporter of labor and collective bargaining, but nobody should be able to buy our representatives' seats and favor. Nobody! The solution to big money influence is not more big money influence. And the solution to the problem of prospective candidates being shut out of the process because they aren't wealthy or have wealthy donors *is not* for them to go out and court wealthy donors and corporations. The solution is campaign finance reform, closed if possible, with a robust, publicly funded, small donor matching program which will allow wider participation from the electorate and reduce the influence of any special interest group on our elected officials and representatives.

Although this is not a "closed" law as the successful State law in Connecticut is, I believe this law is a good place to start and I hope the legislature will support it, enact it quickly and faithfully and fund it as needed.

Sincerely,



Todd D. Wolgamuth

304 Zena Rd.

Kingston, NY 12401

Email- todd.wolgamuth@gmail.com



**Public Comment on Proposed Local Law 10 of 2019 a Local Law Regarding
Campaign Finance Reform
November 12, 2019**

My name is Cynthia Bell and I speak, both as a citizen of Ulster County and as the President of the League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region.

It was both an honor and a pleasure to serve on the subcommittee to refine this law and I found it to be a surprisingly bi-partisan and respectful effort. These legislators generously welcomed input by all of us present and were thoughtful and open to the conversation. In the end, all agreed that this is the best version of the document that will be put before you for a vote.

It seems that the major sticking point of this law is the public financing portion. I certainly understand that, though we all pay for things we'll never use or for helping people we'll never know. I do it all the time because it is for the greater good of our community. These procedures have proven successful in the places where they have been implemented and have resulted in better government that is more representative of the people. Because of this, the League of Women Voters of the United States also supports this type of campaign finance reform.

I believe this law is just about as good as it can be. I believe it sends the message to voters that the Ulster County government supports a fair and balanced democratic process.

Please vote yes for Campaign Finance Reform.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia Bell

November 12, 2019

MEMO

TO: All County Legislators

FROM: Attilio A. Contini

RE: Proposed Local Law Number 10 of 2019

Are you people really Serious?

Even if there was a need why a full length novel?

Do you realize the consequences of this proposed law?

The burden on the County taxpayers could be overwhelming.

Taxpayers funding of elections is a concept who's time should never come.

If this law was already in existence I can think of one candidate who would have received over a million dollars.

If you want to do something about election reform you should start with background checks for all candidates. Anyone who can not get a security clearance should be barred from running for or holding public office.

Your ill conceived local law is a very bad idea.

B:locallaw

Attilio Contini

November 12,2019

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I am Cynthia Wagner, My husband and I live and pay taxes in Ulster County.

I read, several times, the 38 pages of Law #10. The amount of gobbledygook needed to regulate the distribution of the fund is a measure of how flawed an idea it is. A bad idea covered with band-aids is still a bad idea.

X The starter \$75k fund is already set aside in the 2020 budget to distribute to candidates. That is quite a statement in itself.

Where is the fairness in this? Forcing a taxpayer to give money to a Candidate that we do not agree with. That IS what this fund will do. The courts have already ruled that unions can't do this with dues, so why should our own government direct our political speech.

People express themselves in different ways. Supporting the Candidate we like is one of them, they are our voice. Doesn't this go against my freedom of expression or speech? ~~Does the government have the right to tell us who we can and cannot support?~~
~~Does the government have the right to tell us who we can and cannot support?~~

When debating politics with friends and neighbors, One thing we DO agree on is that IT is NOT okay to spend our tax money to pay for political campaigns.

In this proposal it says Candidates can opt in or is it out. Really? I want that same option, do any of you?

And, finally, an unintended consequence of this proposal is that it will increase the cost of everyone's campaign and further elevate dollars over "ideas and opinions" in our elections.

which ever!

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This should be deferred and presented as a ballot proposition in the next election – including the cost of the new hires and hearing officer. If the purpose is to further democracy, then lets be democratic and let the people decide. Put it to a vote.

Thank you

Wagner