

Minutes of the WPCNA Meeting: 1/19/17

Education House, 5 Homeside Lane

Guest Speaker – Benjamin Boykin,
Westchester County Legislator: District 5:

WPCNA Board Members attending:

Todd Gordon	Co-President
Bill Brady	Co-President
Michael Kraver	Co-Vice President
Ron Palmer	Co-Vice President
Ruthmarie Hicks	Recording Secretary

Not in attendance:

Tom Osbeck	Treasurer
Lou Bruno	Corresponding Secretary

The meeting was called to order by Todd Gordon

It was mentioned that the Transit District Study is online.
We can go to transit district site to see the final result.
<http://www.cityofwhiteplains.com/index.aspx?nid=588>

Ben Boykin was the guest speaker. He is a former member of the White Plains Common Council and now represents District 5 on the county board of legislators. This district includes most of White Plains, Scarsdale and West Harrison.

Chairman of Public Safety & Social Services (PSSS)
Vice Chair Budget & Appropriations as well as Appointments
Co-Chair of Minority Affairs
Served on Infrastructure, Legislation and Environment and Health Committees.

Indian Point:

Mr. Boykin said the potential dangers of the power plant had to be balanced with the reality of the area's energy needs.

Shutting it down before you have a replacement is going to a problem with respect to energy supply and energy rates. This will also depress the area around Cortlandt economically and create a massive short-fall for the school budget in that town. 1,000 jobs will disappear.

Closing the plant will reduce certain dangers to the area. However, the spent fuel rods will remain.

Indian Point currently supplies 25% of Westchester's energy needs along with

surrounding areas like NYC. So finding a replacement energy source is not trivial.

The County Budget:

Mr Boykin talked about the county budget. He was one of the few who voted against the budget because it seemed structurally unbalanced.

The current budget includes \$15 million that would be given to the county for Airport privatization. This would have to be covered by an offset in the event the airport is not privatized and that deal is far from certain.

The fund balance is going to deal with the offset if the airport isn't sold. But that is another issue as the fund balance is dwindling. There have been no tax hikes in 7 years and Tax Certs are continuing which reduce the tax base. The county workforce is down from 4400 to 3100 (very rough numbers - but that's almost a 30% reduction).

The sale of the airport:

Mr. Boykin addressed that issue from the perspective of whether or not this was something that the county really should be doing.

Mr Boykin pointed out the following:

- Since 1996 (when airport privatization became possible) only two airports have been privatized.
- Oaktree, the company that is proposing to purchase the county airport owns one such airport in Puerto Rico, is now trying to divest themselves of that airport.
- The deal is being negotiated with no competing offers. Without competing offers, it is hard to determine the value of airport as an asset.
- The garage at the airport is owned by Cappelli. It is supposed to revert back to the county in 2024. That revenue would be in the hands of Oaktree, who probably wouldn't adjust parking fees to benefit residents.

An additional caveat that was brought up is that a private entity would probably want to dramatically expand the airport. Greenwich is already forcing traffic to be diverted towards WP. Up to now the airlines have agreed to not fly very early or very late, but that is a courtesy that they have been giving us and could easily change with major expansion.

Another issue that was brought up was that since payments to the county would

take place over many years, what would happen if Oaktree wanted to get out of the agreement and sell the airport? That could have profound monetary implications down the road.

(For those who are interested, below are links on this topic).

<http://www.lohud.com/story/money/personal-finance/taxes/david-mckay-wilson/2016/12/08/tax-watch-westchester-airport/95108842/>

<http://www.lohud.com/story/opinion/editorials/2016/11/27/table-airport-privatization-see-bids-editorial/94291324/>

<http://www.lohud.com/story/news/investigations/2016/11/13/no-bids-westchester-privatization-deal-airport/93601568/>

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/investigations/2016/04/06/westchester-airport-limits/82631862/>

Water District 1:

We are being tested weekly. UV treatment required. This was not acted upon by the county, but is now being installed. There were extensive fines that were negotiated.

Saxon Woods Area:

Improvements to Saxon Woods Park were discussed including the park, ball fields and renovations to the pool.

New Minimum Wage Standards were disclosed:

(For more info: <https://www.govdocs.com/new-york-state-15-minimum-wage-paid-family-leave/>)

Dec 31, 2016: \$10.00

Dec 31, 2017: \$11.00

Goes up \$1/hour a year until we reach \$15/hour at the end of 2021.

The Gun and Knife Show @ the County Center:

Vote to ban gun shows. Went through, but will be vetoed by County Executive Astorino.

The North 60:

North 60 - 60 acres of land the county owns in Valhalla at the edge of the Grasslands Reservation. Fareri wants to build a \$1.2 billion biotech and medical office with an unprecedented 99 year lease so this would require changing the county charter. Only 35 acres can be developed due to wetlands. The Westchester medical center has the first right of refusal for the project.

Some links on this topic:

<http://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/westchester/2016/01/07/valhalla-north-60/78404852/>

<http://westfaironline.com/83516/north-60-gets-consultants-green-light-for-biotech-center/>

Drone legislation:

This topic was briefly discussed. Drone activity has to be controlled around areas like airports and prisons. This was not an extensive discussion.

The Transit Study:

The results are now online and it was suggested that interested residents look it up online. (<http://www.wptransitdistrict.com/>)

Several questions regarding the transit study were brought up:

Is there room on Metro-North trains for additional passengers when it's currently standing room only during the morning rush? If we double the density with commuters in mind, can Metro-North support the increase?

What about the homeless who are in the train station? Is there any way to control that?

Constellation bought out ConEd solutions:

Questions were raised about the impact this has on our energy rates.

The meeting was adjourned with notice that the next meeting is on February 14.