An Electric Response
Beacon council hears testimony on Danskammer

By Jeff Simms

Well over 100 people packed into Beacon City Hall on Monday (July 29) for a City Council workshop that at times resembled a court proceeding, with litigants taking turns for nearly 90 minutes arguing for and against the proposed expansion of the Danskammer power plant in Newburgh.

Once the testimony was complete, however, council members left little doubt that they plan to adopt a resolution on Aug. 5 opposing the company’s $450 million proposal to rebuild its nearly 70-year-old facility.

If the council passes the resolution, Beacon will become the third municipality in the Highlands — following Cold Spring and Philipstown — to speak out against the project.

Danskammer operates a seldom-used, gas-powered plant that its owners admit is long outdated. Located in the Town of Newburgh, it is 8 miles from Beacon but only a few thousand feet from the Hudson River. It is in the “pre-application” phase of Article 10 of the Public Service Law, the state’s five-step procedure for reviewing power-plant building proposals. It involves public outreach and submitting detailed information to the seven-member Board on Electric Generation Siting and the Environment, which is part of the Department of Public Service.

How They Voted on Weed, Guns, Trump Taxes

After passage by state legislators, governor signs variety of laws

By Chip Rowe

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has been busy signing legislation passed by the state Senate and Assembly before both went on summer hiatus in late June. Below are summaries of 19 newly enacted laws, along with the votes cast by Republican Sue Serino (whose Senate district includes the Highlands), Democrat Sandy Galef (whose Assembly district includes Philipstown) and Democrat Jonathan Jacobson (whose Assembly district includes Beacon). We emailed Serino’s office asking for comments on her votes in the minority, but did not immediately receive a response.

Trump’s tax returns

On July 8, Cuomo signed a bill allowing the release of state tax returns of “certain federal, state and local elected officials, federal executive staff, federal officers and employees, consultants and contractors to write “confidential” on any document to prevent its disclosure.

Odell Signs Putnam Secrecy Law

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell on Tuesday (July 30) signed a law that allows legislators, county employees, consultants and contractors to write “confidential” on any document to prevent its disclosure.

The law’s advocates argue that it codifies existing obligations to identify confidential material and does not conflict with state and federal laws, including provisions of the state Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Critics contend that because those state and federal laws already prevent unwarranted disclosure of sensitive information such as details of undercover police investigations or medical records, the law is unnecessary and likely to be nullified if challenged in court.

Crafted as an amendment to the employee ethics chapter of the county code, the law will take effect after it is filed with the New York Secretary of State.

Along with signing the law on Tuesday, Odell sent the Legislature a memo that endorsed confidentiality in legislative discussions and criticized District 1 Legislator Nancy Montgomery, who voted against the law on July 2. Montgomery, the sole Democrat on the Legislature, represents Philipstown and part of Putnam Valley.

In her memo, Odell said that “making government more accessible to the public is vital to improving the quality of democracy. However, that does not mean that the gate to all government records should be flung open to the public to simply peruse at leisure.”

She postulated that decision makers must “be able to trust in the confidentiality of their meetings and communications if there is to be a free flow of conversation.” Therefore, “to protect our lawmakers’ ability to discuss certain sensitive issues,” the

(Continued on Page 18)
LAUREN DRUMMOND

By Brian PJ Cronin

Lauren Drummond is the founder of the annual Putnam County Wine & Food Fest, which will be held for the first time in Cold Spring, at Mayor's Park, on Aug. 10 and 11.

Why did you bring the festival to Cold Spring?

A lot of the wineries wanted it moved there because there are more attractions and it’s much busier. Most of the people who come to the festival stay for an hour and want to go somewhere else. In Patterson, to be honest—and I live here in Patterson—there’s nothing else to do! I wanted to have it in Cold Spring years ago, but at the time I was told you had to be a resident to put on a festival.

Was there food from the beginning?

It always had wine and food, but originally I tried to make it more international and to get French wineries involved. For the first two years after I started in 2010, I called it the Putnam County International Wine & Food Fest.

So now it’s mostly local vendors?

It’s mostly Hudson Valley vendors and wineries, but it’s all New York state. I’ve tried to get some wineries in Connecticut to attend but they don’t have licenses to serve in New York. And I’ve had Long Island wineries, but it’s far for them.

You’re a native of Jamaica. Does Jamaica have good wines?

The island has Pimento wine and others, of course! Personally, I like red wines, mostly Cabernets. But no favorites.

Are there any vendors at the festival you’re particularly excited about?

That’s hard, because if I mention one person, everyone else might get upset! But Glynwood is going to be there on Sunday for a cooking demonstration. It’s doing a hell of a job educating people about organic food.
Garrison Gas Station Wants Canopy

Also asks Philipstown for OK to sell used cars

By Chip Rowe

The Philipstown Planning Board will hold a public hearing on Aug. 15 to hear feedback on a plan to add a canopy over the gas pumps at the Gulf station on Route 9D in Garrison.

Arafat Ibrahim, who bought the property in 2013, said he also would like to sell a handful of used cars on the 1-acre site — something that has been done informally and which earned the station at least one citation.

Neighbors have expressed concern about the proposals. In a letter to the Planning Board, 47 neighbors calling themselves the Garrison Hamlet Association cited inaccuracies in Ibrahim’s application and asked the board to conduct a careful review, “given that the property is adjacent to an historic public school, church and wetlands, and is within direct view of at least 15 homes and two parks.”

The group expressed concern about potential contamination of the groundwater during construction, pollution of the wetlands, a canopy being an eyesore and the ongoing car sales, with test drives taking place on Nelson Lane.

“We are constantly struggling against the perception that this neighborhood is a commercial zone, where anything goes,” the residents wrote. “It is not. The Hamlet Mixed-Use zone should not be interpreted as a commercial hub or catch-all.”

Attorney Bart Lansky, who represents Ibrahim, told the Planning Board on July 18 that the canopy design had been modified in response to the concerns. He said that, like the Appalachian Market station on Route 9, the Gulf canopy would be shingled and have no signs and that a stone veneer will be added to the front of the building.

“Canopies have become a basic requirement” for gas stations, Lansky said. “People will no longer stop for gas if it’s raining or snowing.” He said the lighting would be directed straight down and its spread limited by an overhang.

In addition, he said, Ibrahim is willing to use plantings instead of a chain-link fence to obscure cars parked to the north of the pumps. Lansky said on July 18 he would submit a revised application.

Ron Gainer, the town engineer, said the state Department of Environmental Conservation has not had any concerns about the station since it ended monitoring in 2009 of an earlier spill, and that the county planning department gave its OK.

Lansky said his client plans to have no more than five cars for sale at any time. Steve Gaba, the town attorney, said the board must determine if used car sales are “usual and customary” for filling stations, although the Gulf is also a repair shop, and the town allows limited car sales at those locations.

The public hearing is scheduled to take place during the Planning Board’s Aug. 15 meeting, which begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Old VFW Hall, 34 Kemble Ave., in Cold Spring.
Living on the Edge

Great article (“Living on the Edge, Part 2,” July 26). I would love to know how much these new jobs coming in will pay. Are the positions low-wage, low-skilled jobs or will they have openings for people with higher degrees offering real salaries and benefits?

Beacon Mayor Randy Casale’s point about people historically struggling to pay rent is incredibly obtuse and explains why “affordable” housing in Beacon is non-existent, no matter what officials or developers say. There is no reason why there should be rental properties in this area that exceed $2,000 per month, especially if citizens are relying on minimum-wage jobs. Frankly, $2,000 is still too much. I moved here years ago when you could find many apartments under $1,000, including utilities. The area was not bad. It had art, culture and restaurants. Not all of the places made it, but we see businesses close all the time now.

It boils down to sustainability and it seems that the elected officials are more interested in catering to tourists than full-time residents and business owners. I would love to support the local eateries and shops as I once did, but with the price of living increasing and wages staying stagnant, it doesn’t make sense to spend money on a $20 burger.

Danielle Blackwood, Beacon

The editor responds: Industrial Arts Brewing Co. addressed its hiring plans in the story last week, and we reached out to Cafe Spice and Docuware for comment this week. From Paual Mulhostra at Cafe Spice: “I would love to be able to give positions and salaries right now. However, to be honest, we don’t know what they will be until we get closer to the time.” And from Thomas Schneek at Docuware: “The information technology industry typically pays above-average salaries due to the high demand for IT knowledge and expertise.”

It is good to see that the economic-development work to bring in jobs that has been happening behind the scenes for the past few years may finally yield results. But Beacon still has a way to go — New York state is tough in terms of affordability for businesses, and in Beacon, the right space is an issue. The three companies profiled in the article are committed to Beacon, with a fourth in development at Camp Beacon. In total, they could possibly bring in more than 400 well-paying jobs. In a city our size, that is impactful.

The next steps include making sure that Beacon schoolkids are getting the education they need to fill these jobs in the future. One correction: Beacon’s population remains flat despite the housing units being built. I agree that there will be some growth when everything is completed, but there will not be 2,000 more residents by 2022 on top of the current population, which in 2017 was much lower than its recent peak in 2010. According to our city planner, about half of the 1,000 units projected in 2017 are completed and close to being filled (with 21 percent offered at below-market rates). In addition, there are no new large-scale residential projects in front of the Planning Board, and only 21 units that haven’t been approved.

Kelly Ellenwood, Beacon

Ellenwood is a candidate for the Ward 4 seat on the Beacon City Council. The (up to) 2,000-person population projection came from the water-supply report prepared for the city last year by LBG Hydrogeologic & Engineering Services.

God almighty, the propaganda in this article is annoying (“Living on the Edge, Part 1,” July 19). Leave it to the leftists at the United Way to avoid facts, because that integrity would violate the narrative.

Putnam County is among the top 20 highest-taxed counties in the U.S., and the tax bases of Cold Spring, Nelsonville and Philipstown are stretched for various reasons. As for Dutchess County, its problems are caused by unfunded state mandates. Because the clowns in Albany never met a dollar they did not know how to spend, they have forced local governments to cover unfunded mandates.

Population changes are either creating a bigger demand for government services or the progressive destruction of the tax base (e.g., population losses) are forcing the remaining residents to pay higher taxes. New York state lost more than 27,000 residents last year.

What residents need to accept is the fact the greed and incompetence of Albany is destroying the state’s tax bases and private-sector economy. As a result, New York is slowly self-destructing. Until the voters stop the greed and incompetence, it will continue to self-destruct and all the leftist preening in the world will not stop it.

Joseph Pedro III, via Facebook

Part 1 of Living on the Edge seems comprehensive, but I see no mention of the effect of taxation on the cost of living, and the ability to afford it, for a majority of residents in Putnam and Dutchess counties.

Today a household income of $100,000 (adjusted to $80,000 taxable) is taxed
roughly at $11,000 to $15,000 each year in federal income taxes and $4,400 to $5,900 in state income taxes. Income taxes are marginally lower but property taxes are significantly higher for those owning a residence. The figures don’t include Social Security and Medicare.

The tax rates are, of course, lower for those with lower incomes, but once a household’s income is too low to afford the local costs of living, as indicated in the article, it becomes irrelevant as people will either be moving or accumulating more difficult-to-pay debt. (An insignificant few will win the lottery, inherit money or become professional politicians.)

All that tax money could be used to help cover the expenses of those who work and try to live here.

A hundred and 10 years ago there was no tax on incomes and little taxation of property. Most tax revenue came from licenses, fees and tariffs on overseas imports as they were passed on to consumers. Prices (and wages) were much lower. Coins contained mostly precious and semi-precious metals: silver and gold, nickel and copper, and were worth more. There was little paper money. After World War I, manufacturers noticed their potential customer base could not afford to pay cash for their products (incomes were too low relative to the high prices of new and professionally marketed products), and they started to offer installment plans. That system evolved into consumer debt, and the interest on that debt has effectively become yet one more tax.

Frank Haggerty, Cold Spring

Secrecy hearing

On July 24 I attended the afternoon public comment session (an evening session was also scheduled) at the county office building for the newly passed confidentiality law.

I was surprised and disappointed that County Executive MaryEllen Odell was not present. We were told that our comments were being recorded for her to listen to later. While a recording will provide a necessary account of the meeting, listening to recordings (with all the distractions involved in such an exercise) is not the same as attending in person to witness constituents voicing their opinions on a law that Ms. Odell alone could pass or veto based in part on those comments. I believe the county executive owes more attention and respect to the process as well as to the citizens of Putnam County.

Although I could not remain for the entire session, in addition to myself I heard a number of attendees voice reasons why such a law is redundant and unnecessary. They included Mahopac resident Marsha Waldman, who said that she opposed the

Why I Flipped on Secrecy

By Chip Rowe

Many people were concerned when the Putnam Legislature passed a law on July 2 that allows county lawmakers, employees, contractors and consultants to mark any document “confidential,” keeping it safe from the prying eyes of voters and (God forbid) journalists, and threatening a one-way ticket to the ethics board and possible prosecution for anyone who intentionally shares material deemed secret.

It also makes any interactions with the Law Department, or the legislative counsel, automatically confidential, which is convenient. If you want to keep something secret, send a copy to the lawyers!

I was concerned about the law — at first. But I have grown to love it and am thankful to County Executive MaryEllen Odell for making it official despite the warnings from a number of legal minds that it might not be prudent.

I hate to think I caused the county executive or any legislator undue stress when I shared the proposed law with the state’s Open Government Committee and the New York News Publishers Association, of which The Current is a member, and they shared it with a few lawyers who specialize in free speech. Some chuckled after reading it, which is rude. But everyone agreed the law was pointless, and unenforceable, since county lawmakers can’t make anything confidential — only state and federal law can do that. The NYNPA wrote Odell to let her know.

In fact, the county agreed! In a statement, eight of the nine legislators reassured residents not to worry. This statement was read at a public hearing hosted by Odell (who wasn’t there) by the legislative counsel, a.k.a. “the 10th legislator,” who has written a number of resolutions at taxpayers’ expense destined for a circular file in Albany. In the statement, the lawmakers complained about the news media stirring up trouble and insisted the regulation was not meant to hide anything from voters but to remind county employees that they work behind one-way glass.

But, look, that’s all in the past. My kids are at camp and, in the quiet, I realized how foolish I’ve been. When I rejected the law because of how it looked, I failed to recognize its inner beauty: From this day forward, anything a legislator or county official doesn’t want the press or the public to see will be marked “confidential.” It’s like Monte Hall telling you which door has the prize.

I have marked my calendar, and on the first business day of each month, beginning Sept. 3, The Current will file a FOIL request with each county agency (including the new tourism department!) to receive every document marked confidential in the previous month. These should not be too hard to locate, since they will have “confidential” written on them.

I am sorry to create work for anyone, but under state law, the county attorney will be compelled to review each allegedly confidential item — including those produced by the Law Department or the legislative counsel, no freebies! — to determine if they fall under one of eight exemptions to the state Freedom of Information Law that dictate when governments can withhold information.

What’s more, the FOIL doesn’t allow the county to say a set of documents or emails is exempt. It must review the contents of each document and, if anything can be released, even a paragraph, redact the secret material and release the rest.

Before this new county law, a reporter would often fly blind, guessing which Putnam documents might have the information he or she was after. Now the secrets will be marked with blinking neon signs. We plan to share what we find in a feature called Confidential Corner that will launch later this year.

Thank you, Putnam County Legislature! I’m glad we could work together on this.
law because it would prevent people who see wrongdoing in the government from speaking out for fear of reprisals, and a woman who went through several points of the law and showed how it could prevent important unclassified information from reaching the public.

On the other side of the issue, the county’s legislative council — claiming the media had not reported the pending law accurately — went through every law that covers all situations of confidentiality and assured everyone that the new law would not affect existing laws. He said that the reason for the new law was to provide guidance to employees and others so they would know which documents should be designated as confidential. His presentation served to prove the point to me that the law was indeed superfluous and misguided.

I wonder why Putnam County does not simply provide the appropriate staff training and create clear policies and procedures to guide appointees, staff and outside consultants and counsel on the matter of confidentiality. Adding this law gives the impression of providing cover to and protection for those who run the county.

We voters must have open and transparent government to ensure that we can make informed decisions at the voting booths and hold our elected officials accountable between elections. A government that operates in the shadows does not serve the people.

I am grateful that County Legislator Nancy Montgomery and Philipstown Supervisor Richard Shea have stood up for Putnam County citizens by opposing this questionable legislation. We need more elected officials like them.

Jeanne Nelson, Mahopac

Pantry rules

I love the concept of Beacon’s Tiny Food Pantries, which are located outside the Recreation Center and in the Howland Public Library. If you need something to eat, take something. If you want to help out a neighbor, leave something.

Recently I brought home a few things from the Rec Center pantry, not because I was in need, but because I was disgusted — a bag of expired flour with worms in it, a box of store-brand onion soup mix along with yellowed packets of generic seasoning mix and a rusty can of jalapeños from circa 2014. Also, a giant bottle of hot wing sauce that went off in 2013, just like the can of poppy seed filling I found after the holidays.

In the past I would at least recycle the cans after dumping the contents, but I still have nightmares about the 12 cans of coconut cream I brought home last fall that had petri-died into yellow-tinged rocks. That’s a scent that stays with you longer than Chanel No. 5. I put up a sign about a year ago that reads, “Please, no expired food, thank you.” Boy, was that effective! I destroyed the notion that this food was being left because people didn’t realize what they were doing. I spent a lot of time over a lot of years volunteering at soup kitchens and food pantries — people who do this know what they’re doing. And it’s time it stopped.

One day, out of too many days like it, as volunteers at a pantry in New Jersey were complaining as they weeded expired food out of the donations, an oafish, conscripted husband carrying in a crate decided he was putting an end to the matter by bellowing, “Beggars can’t be choosers!” Think about the savage mentality and perspective of someone who can say a thing like that about leaving rotten food for his fellow humans, especially when he has been blessed with the ability to give, rather than burdened with the need to receive.

Like all of our societal cruelties and idiosyncrasies, this contempt for people in need is borne out of fear. Poverty in any incarnation is terrifying — that’s something we all share. How we handle that as individuals is another matter. If it makes you feel better about yourself to show your contempt for people who haven’t caught the break you have, you have a problem. No need to make it someone else’s. Keep it to yourself, along with the unwanted remains of that gift basket from 2015.

So many seem to view those in need as some alien species to whom they can’t relate. It helps to remember that some people live in residential hotels or rooming houses and only have access to a microwave or maybe a clandestine hot plate. Many are elderly or disabled and just can’t handle anything beyond a microwave, toaster oven or a single aluminum pan on a stove top.

Please, don’t forget those on the street. Cans of beans and bags of rice won’t help any of them, or even every family. Countless people work two and three jobs just to keep a roof over their heads and don’t have the time, energy or presence of mind to cook anything involved. If you can afford it, toss an extra item in your cart, virtual or otherwise. Yes, organic or reduced salt, sugar or fat items are great. But a can of stew, soup, hash, chili or pasta is a comforting, filling, hearty meal that’s easy to prepare. Fresh and shelf-stable fruit and vegetables are a great idea, as well as granola bars.

Giving things that show you have some understanding of what your neighbors are dealing with shows respect, expresses camaraderie, and acknowledges that there, but for the grace of God, or whatever your belief system allows, go we. We’re all seeing where divisiveness leads. Perhaps it’s time to try something new.

Susan Jeelich, Beacon

(Continued on Page 7)

HELP WANTED

Haldane Central School District, Cold Spring, NY 10516
Effective on September 3, 2019:

• TWO (2) TEACHER AIDE positions (elementary level), part-time (not to exceed 5 hours per day); 10-month positions in accordance with the school calendar, $14.74/hr.

• CAFETERIA WORKER, part-time, 4 hours per day (10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.); 10-month position in accordance with the school calendar, $14.78/hr.

• CAFETERIA WORKER, per diem substitute, $14.76/hr.

If interested in any of the above positions, please either call or stop in to the District Office to request an application: Haldane Central School District, 15 C addictive Drive, Cold Spring, NY 10516 at 845-265-9254, ext 111. You may also download and mail a non-teaching application from the Haldane web site, www.haldanecsd.org (click the District tab, then District Resources tab, Employment). Please mail the completed application no later than August 5, 2019. A fingerprinting/criminal background check clearance is required.

PHILIPSTOWN PLANNING BOARD | Public Hearing – August 15, 2019

The Philipstown Planning Board of the Town of Philipstown, New York will hold a public hearing on Thursday, August 15, 2019 starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Old VFW Hall, 34 Kemble Ave., in Cold Spring, New York to consider the following application:

1122 Route 9D Realty LLC, 1122 Route 9D, Garrison – The applicant is seeking Amended Site Plan approval for the construction of a 24’ x 32’ canopy over the existing fuel pump island. The applicant is also seeking approval for the accessory use of limited used car sales as an adjunct to the gasoline sales and auto repair activities already being conducted on site. The property is approximately 0.5 acres and is situated in a “HM” (Hamlet Mixed-Use) Zoning District in the Town of Philipstown. T&M 60.18-1-46.

At said hearing all persons will have the right to be heard. Copies of the application, plat map, and other related materials may be seen in the Office of the Planning Board at the Philipstown Town Hall.

Dated at Philipstown, New York, this 26th day of July, 2019.

Anthony Merante, Chairman
Creating meadows

Over the past few days as the verges in the village have been mown, the dreaded drone of the mowers and leaf blowers has been constant, and with it their indiscriminate spewing of carbon emissions and stinking air pollution.

In the U.K., many small towns and cities are “rewilding,” or allowing grass verges to grow during the summer, or planting native wild flowers to create mini-meadows [see right]. This has the triple benefit of reducing mowing costs and the associated pollution, sequestering carbon and allowing biodiversity to flourish.

I wonder if you know of any such efforts in Philipstown?

Zoe Tcholak-Antitch, Cold Spring

Tourism bureau

Buckle up, taxpayers — we’re going to dump more money into the Putnam County Golf Course and Tilly Foster Farm follies, neglecting Putnam’s actual tourism base on the west side of the county (“Putnam Will Consider Tourism Agency,” July 26).

The composition of the committee searching for a director of the county’s new tourism department says everything about how the position will operate: Legislator Ginny Nacerino, Putnam County Finance Commissioner Bill Carlin Jr., Deputy Commissioner of Highways and Facilities John Tully (Tilly Foster Farm is managed by Highways and Facilities), and Putnam County Golf Course General Manager Mike McCall.

Kathleen Foley, Cold Spring

In a statement dated July 28, County Executive MaryEllen Odell said the county was “close to choosing a new results-driven director of tourism who will showcase Putnam as a destination and promote the economic growth of the county.” She said the panel would send its recommendations to her, and she would forward her choice to the Legislature for approval. “Putnam’s natural beauty sells itself,” she said, “but the new tourism director will work with stakeholders throughout the county and be better able to entice visitors.” She added that she transitioned from the nonprofit Putnam County Visitors’ Bureau to a county agency would be “swift and seamless” and highlighted Tilly Foster Farm and Magazzino Italian Art in Philipstown.

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Vehicle Crashes into Cold Spring Reservoir
Driver charged with driving under influence

Putnam County sheriff’s deputies arrested a Pleasant Valley woman on July 18 after she apparently drove her vehicle into the Village of Cold Spring reservoir on Fishkill Road in Philipstown.

Two deputies who were called to the scene at about 5:30 p.m. said they found a vehicle semi-submerged in the reservoir and its occupants, who included two children, ages 6 and 9, outside of the vehicle.

Police say the driver, Ellexis Hoerl, 23, who was babysitting the children, was allegedly impaired by drugs when she crashed the vehicle through a guardrail and bounced off a retaining wall into the reservoir. The children, who are siblings, were taken to the hospital and released, without injury, to their parents.

Police say Hoerl was found to have concentrated cannabis and Adderall and placed under arrest. She was charged with two counts of felony DWI under Leandra’s Law (which makes driving under the influence an automatic felony when anyone age 15 or younger is in the vehicle), one count of driving while impaired by drugs, two counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance and two counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

Beacon Man Sentenced for Child Porn
Receives 5 to 15 years in state prison

A former state corrections officer who pleaded guilty in June to five felony counts of possessing child pornography, was sentenced on July 26 by a Dutchess County judge to 5 to 15 years in state prison.

Neil Tchorznicki, 52, was arrested in September. He admitted to having five digital photos, including images of children as young as 2 or 3 years old. The state police began an investigation after receiving information about Tchorznicki from its Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

Beacon Senior Center Open Fridays
County adds hours starting Aug. 2

The Dutchess County Office for the Aging will open its Senior Friendship Center in Beacon on Fridays, beginning today (Aug. 2). The center, at 1 Forrestal Heights, is now open every weekday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The county has eight senior centers that provide older residents with companionship and activities, as well as meals. It also delivers meals to homebound seniors. For information, call 845-486-2555.

New State Trooper from Garrison
Among graduates from police academy

The basic school of the New York Police Academy graduated 228 state troopers on July 24 in Albany, including Nicholas Molyneaux of Garrison.

The troopers underwent more than six months of intense academic, physical and tactical training. They reported for field duty on July 31 and will be evaluated over 10 weeks.

Molyneaux was assigned to Troop K, which is based in Poughkeepsie and whose officers patrol the Highlands.

Dutchess Awards Grants
City of Beacon among recipients

Dutchess County has awarded $277,000 to provide crisis intervention training to police officers in Beacon and 13 other municipalities; $335,000 to the Dutchess County Drug Task Force for undercover work; and $37,500 to the Child Advocacy Center for a detective.

Road Closings
Expect delays in Cold Spring and Philipstown

Two major roads are undergoing closings.

In Philipstown, Old Albany Post Road will close on Wednesday, Aug. 7, until further notice from Philipsbrook Road to Travis Corners Road so that crews can replace a bridge deck. To access Route 9, residents to the north can use Philipsbrook to Frazier and residents to the south can use Travis Corners Road.

In Cold Spring, the state Department of Transportation is repaving Morris Avenue (Route 9D) from the traffic light at Main Street north to the Haldane tennis courts. The northbound lane was closed this week and the southbound lane will be closed next week.

Hudson Anchorage Ban Passes House
Maloney provision moves to Senate

A bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 24 to fund the Coast Guard through 2021 includes a provision that would ban new oil-barge anchorages on the Hudson River.

It was introduced by Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, a Philipstown resident whose district includes the Highlands and who chairs the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The bill moved on July 25 to the Senate for consideration.

In 2016, the Coast Guard proposed 10 new anchorage sites on the river between Yonkers and Kingston, including one near Beacon. An assessment completed in March 2018 did not include plans to add barges to the two that exist — one at Yonkers and one at Hyde Park — but it also did not rule out more sites being proposed.

Office for the Aging
Needs Vendors

Annual senior event on Sept. 28

The Dutchess County Office for the Aging is looking for vendors for the annual Senior Golden Gathering to be held on Sept. 28 in LaGrangeville.

More than 1,000 seniors usually attend the free event, which includes health screenings, entertainment, refreshments, door prizes and informational tables for organizations that primarily serve seniors. Vendor tables are provided at no charge on a first-come, first-served basis. For information, call 845-229-0106 or email goldengathering41@gmail.com before Aug. 30.
Are Food Trucks Unfair Competition?

Cold Spring allows a test run at Mayor’s Park

By Michael Turton

The Cold Spring Village Board is considering to what extent food trucks should be allowed to operate on village-owned property.

The issue arose at the board’s July 23 meeting after Michelle McGuire, owner of Michelle’s Roadside Kitchen, set up her truck at Mayor’s Park on the weekend of July 20 and 21 without the permit required by the village. When she realized the permit was needed (she has one from the Town of Philipstown), she approached the village and applied.

At the meeting, trustees granted her permission to return to Mayor’s Park the following weekend, although a mechanical problem prevented that. McGuire said she will set up at Mayor’s Park on another weekend in the near future when there is not an event going on.

At the outset of the discussion, Mayor Dave Merandy asked his fellow board members if they objected, in principle, to food trucks in the village. No one objected.

During the public comment period, Bill Ehrlich, who lives across from Mayor’s Park, raised a number of concerns ranging from noise, smells, signage and traffic to litter and hours of operation.

Rebecca Ramirez, co-owner of The Cheese Shop on Main Street, said she supports food trucks, saying “if they take just 25 customers on a Saturday, at $30 per check, that’s a lot of money to lose.”

Cold Spring resident Greg McElhattan, who recently sold the Greg’s Good Eats truck that he operated for three years, mainly on Route 9 in Philipstown, at Little League games and private parties, countered in an interview that “if restaurants fear a food truck, maybe it’s time they took a look at their menu and prices.”

McGuire usually sets up on Route 9 near Philipstown’s northern boundary. She is also considering the Haldane ball field on Route 9D.

She said she doesn’t feel setting up at Mayor’s Park is a threat to restaurants.

“I’m not trying to take anything away from village businesses,” she said. “That’s why I’ve stayed at the edge of the village,” rather than closer to Main Street.

Merandy said allowing McGuire to operate at Mayor’s Park will be “a trial run” that will enable the board to assess its impact. After McGuire has been at the park for a second weekend, he said, a meeting will be held for discussion and to hear public comment.

Trustees are also discussed the merits of permitting a food truck at Dockside Park when the Seastreak cruise line begins docking in the fall. Local restaurants often struggle to serve the hundreds of visitors who arrive at the same time.

In an email, Eliza Starbuck, the president of the Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce said that “we appreciate the village trustees’ cautious, test-mode approach.”

The village code, currently being updated, doesn’t address food trucks but stipulates that “hawking and peddling” requires a license that costs up to $25 a day, or $100 per month. Merandy and other board members said the fees need to be reviewed. Philipstown and Nelsonville codes include similar requirements.

Dave Buckley, Beacon’s building inspector, said the city allows food trucks but there has been no demand for them. Its code prohibits vendors and peddlers within 200 feet of school property and 1,000 feet of similar businesses. Buckley said interest may be building for food trucks in Beacon’s riverfront parks, noting that there are no restaurants there.

What’s Your WOODSTOCK Story?

If you were at Woodstock in 1969, or lived or worked near there, The Current would like to include your story in our Aug. 16 edition to mark the 50th anniversary of the iconic festival. Send us 200 words describing your experience. PHOTOS WELCOME!

Or … if you know someone who was there, ask them to submit a story!

Submit stories & photos no later than Aug. 13 to: woodstock@highlandscurrent.org

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37 Chestnut Street
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Winged Beauties

Stony Kill Farm in Wappingers Falls held its annual Butterfly Festival on Saturday (July 27).

Photos by Ross Corsair
Returning to Woodstock, Although She Wasn’t There

Beacon author remembers era when everything changed

By Alison Rooney

A lot of teenagers dreamed of heading to Woodstock in 1969. Sharon Watts wasn’t one of them. For starters, she got her driver’s license just two days before the festival began on Aug. 15.

A self-described “good girl” from suburban Pennsylvania, she was more interested in pop culture and fashion than hippies and rocking out. Fifty years later, though, she’s kicking herself for missing out, and making amends by immersing herself in the time and place.

A day trip in 2017 from her Beacon home to the Woodstock Museum at Bethel Woods stimulated her interest and led to a book she wrote and illustrated, *By The Time I Got to Woodstock: An Illustrated Memoir of a Reluctant Hippie Chick*. She’ll be reading from it, sharing her artwork and talking trivia at the Howland Public Library on Tuesday, Aug. 13, at 6:30 p.m.

“The museum made me consider who I was in 1969,” Watts explains. Over the cold winter months that followed, she started watching YouTube videos of the musicians. “It wound up being a full immersion,” she says.

“It made me feel weird because I wasn’t involved,” she says. “I lived through it, but didn’t participate. The place I grew up in was a little stuck behind, still in the Eisenhower era. It was on the cusp of changing, but dragging behind. For instance, girls couldn’t wear pants at my school until 1979 — and this wasn’t a Catholic school with uniforms. In our little world, we wanted to wear pants, some of the boys wanted to have long hair, but the community wasn’t ready for it.”

After graduating from high school, Watts moved to New York City to study at Parsons School of Design. “It was as much an escape from the suburbs as any real plan,” she recalls. “I was interested in fashion, but I couldn’t sew or drape.” She became a fashion illustrator and until 2000 freelanced steadily for *The New York Times*, often illustrating Style Editor Carrie Donovan’s weekly column.

Watts moved to Beacon shortly before 9/11, in part because she was in a relationship with a firehouse captain, Patrick J. Brown. “I was just looking for a quieter place,” she says, “and I was working on assemblages, for which I needed a place that could be messy.” Brown died rescuing victims during the 9/11 attacks.


Soon after her visit to the Woodstock Museum, she received a drawing pen and notebook as a Christmas gift. “I started draw-

(Continued on Page 14)
THE WEEK AHEAD

Edited by Pamela Doan (calendar@highlandscurrent.org)
For a complete listing of events, see highlandscurrent.org/calendar.

COMMUNITY

SAT 3
Bird Festival
BEAR MOUNTAIN
11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Trailside Zoo
3006 Seven Lakes Drive
845-786-2701 | trailsidezoo.org
Celebrate the birds of New York state with a visit to see a bald eagle, owls and hawks. At 1 p.m. Brian Robinson of Robinson Wildlife will present a raptor show. Parking is $10 and entrance to the zoo is $1 per person.

SAT 3
Sun & Earth Festival
WAPPINGERS FALLS
3 – 8 p.m. Common Ground Farm
79 Farmstead Lane | 845-231-4424
commongroundfarm.org
Celebrate sustainable agriculture and environmentalism with yoga, kids’ activities, food trucks, cooking demonstrations, music and a dance party. Free

SUN 4
Club/Draw Picnic
BEACON
2 – 9 p.m. University Settlement Camp
724 Wolcott Ave.
facebook.com/clubdrawbeacon
This fifth annual fundraiser by the club for Beacon’s Parks & Recreation Department will feature burgers and hot dogs from Barb’s Butchery, comedy improv, chess, hoops, lawn games and, of course, drawing. Musicians scheduled to appear include Caldera, Common Tongue, Kidaurra, Stephen Clair, Matt Harle, Shana Falana, Dirt Bikes and Liz Kelly.

THURS 8
Citizen Preparedness Training
BEACON
6:30 p.m. Lewis Tompkins Hose Co.
13 South Ave. | 845-638-5010
prepare.ny.gov
This state program gives participants the tools and resources to prepare for any type of disaster, respond accordingly and recover as quickly as possible. It will include active shooter training. Call to register, or email cityofbeacon@cityofbeacon.org.

SAT 10
Putnam County Wine & Food Fest
COLD SPRING
11 a.m. – 6 p.m. Mayor’s Park
61 Fair St. | 800-557-4185
putnamcountyywinefest.com
The two-day festival, in its ninth year and its first in Cold Spring, will include wine tastings, a beer garden, cider, spirits and vineyards from the Hudson Valley and around New York. There will also be food, music, arts and crafts vendors, and cooking demos. See Page 2. The Current will have a booth, so say hello. Also SUN 11. Rain or shine. Use code TPFD2019 to have 45 percent of ticket cost donated to the Philipstown Food Pantry. Cost: $20 ($30 gate; $10 designated driver)

SAT 10
Great Hudson River Fish Count
COLD SPRING
2 – 3:30 p.m. Little Stony Point
dec.ny.gov/lands/97891.html
The state Department of Environmental Conservation will hold its eighth annual inventory of aquatic life up and down the Hudson River. Volunteers are welcome. See website for other locations.

SAT 10
Farm Dinner
COLD SPRING
6:30 p.m. Glynwood | 362 Glynwood Road
845-265-3338 | glynwood.org
The team from Juanita’s Kitchen in Nelsonville will take over the monthly dinner series at the peak of the season. Share a meal and meet the farmers. Cost: Pay what you can

SUN 11
Corn Festival
BEACON
Noon – 5 p.m. Riverfront Park
2 Red Flynn Drive | 845-463-4660
beaconsloopclub.org
At this annual harvest event hosted by the Beacon Sloop Club, enjoy your fill of corn, live music, craft and food vendors and, until 4 p.m., a school bus converted into a mobile gym for children ages 3 months to 9 years. The sloop Woody Guthrie will also provide free public sails. New this year: a contest for corn muffins made from scratch. Drop off entries at the Contest Tent before 2 p.m. The festival takes place rain or shine. Free

VISUAL ART

FRI 2
Tim D’Aquisto and Grace Kennedy
COLD SPRING
6 – 8:30 p.m. Hustler Levi Gallery
121 Main St. | 845-809-5145
bustlerivigallery.com
This new show of paintings continues through Sept. 1.

SAT 3
Timeless Art: The American Quilt
BEACON
2:30 – 6 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
121 Main St. | 845-809-5145
howlandculturalcenter.org
This state program gives and create three-dimensional structural paper pieces with Courtney McCarthy, a paper engineer and graphic designer who has published nine pop-up books, including Gaudi Pop-Ups, Hokusai Pop-Ups and ABC Pop-Up. Registration required. Cost: $60

WED 7
The Art of Photographing Your Art
GARRISON
10 a.m. Garrison Art Center
23 Garrison’s Landing | 845-424-3960
garrisonartcenter.org
Rick Holbrook will explain how to photograph artwork, including lighting, setting up a shot and editing the images. Registration required. Cost: $50

THURS 8
Responsive Drawing/ Collage
GARRISON
10 a.m. Garrison Art Center
23 Garrison’s Landing | 845-424-3960
garrisonartcenter.org
Andrea Moreau will lead this workshop in which participants create collages that combine drawn and found elements taken from old encyclopedias, postcards, patterned paper, children’s stickers and other detritus. Registration required. Cost: $60

FRI 9
Techniques in Shibori
GARRISON
9:30 a.m. Garrison Art Center
23 Garrison’s Landing | 845-424-3960
garrisonartcenter.org
Shibori is cloth that is given three-dimensional shape and then dyed. This workshop by Katrin Reifeiss will examine folding, binding and stitching techniques. Registration required. Cost: $60

SAT 10
Juried Exhibition
PEEKSKILL
4 – 6 p.m. Hudson Valley MOCA
1701 Main St. | 914-799-0100
hudsonvallemoca.org
This reception will open the first juried exhibition at the museum, with works from 22 artists, many of whom will be present. Cost: $10 ($5 seniors, students, veterans, children, members free)

TUES 6
Pop-Up Construction Workshop
GARRISON
10 a.m. Garrison Art Center
23 Garrison’s Landing | 845-424-3960
garrisonartcenter.org
Learn how to pleat, fold, cut and create three-dimensional structural paper pieces with Courtney McCarthy, a paper engineer and graphic designer who has published nine pop-up books, including Gaudi Pop-Ups, Hokusai Pop-Ups and ABC Pop-Up. Registration required. Cost: $60
Drifter depict a nomad’s life after ecosystem destruction. Walsh’s exhibit, Vibrant Traces, features works on paper marking time with changes in nature.

KIDS & FAMILY
SAT 3 Shellabration CORNWALL
10 a.m. Wildlife Education Center 25 Boulevard | 845-534-7781 hhnm.org
Learn about and meet aquatic and terrestrial turtles. Cost: $8 ($6 children, $5/$3 members)

SAT 3 Star Wars Party BEACON
Noon – 2 p.m. Howland Public Library 313 Main St. | 845-831-1134 beaconlibrary.org
With music from the films as background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background, test your knowledge of Star Wars trivia, work on a background.

MON 5 Jedi Academy GARRISON
2 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library 472 Route 403 | 845-424-3020 desmondfishlibrary.org
Children ages 4 and older are invited to learn from a Wise Master how to use the force, mind tricks and light-saber techniques.

FRI 9
Introduction to Babysitting BEACON
1 p.m. Howland Public Library 313 Main St. | 845-831-1134 x103 beaconlibrary.org
The four-hour course, led by Amanda Tucker for students ages 10 and older, will include instruction on safety and first aid, feeding and diaper changing, as well as job skills such as interviewing. Registration required by phone, or email youth@ beaconlibrary.org.

SECOND SATURDAY
SAT 10
Thursday Painters BEACON
5 – 7 p.m. Howland Public Library 313 Main St. | 845-831-1134 beaconlibrary.org
Seniors instructed by Jan Delan will share their artwork depicting their favorite dishes, including the recipes.

SAT 10
Swarm BEACON
6 – 9 p.m. bau Gallery | 506 Main St. 845-440-7584 | baugallery.org
Ceramics artist Faith Adams will exhibit hand-thrown plates and tea sets adorned with screen-printed endangered and threatened insects. Cali Gorevic will show her work in Arborvals in the Beacon Room and Gallery 2 will have works by a variety of Beacon Artist Union members.

SAT 10
Mark Darnobid and Keely Sheehan BEACON
6 – 9 p.m. Catalyst Gallery 137 Main St. | 845-204-3844 catalystgallery.com
This is the closing reception for the exhibit, which ends Aug. 12.

TALKS & TOURS
SAT 3
History of Glynwood Walk COLD SPRING
11 a.m. Glynwood Center 362 Glynwood Road | 845-265-3338 glynwood.org
Walk the property and tour the historic houses while discovering the rich history of the families who lived at Glynwood. Cost: Pay what you can

WED 7
Butterfield History Walking Tour COLD SPRING
6:30 p.m. Butterfield Library 10 Morris Ave. | 845-265-3040 butterfieldlibrary.org
Learn about the history of the Butterfield’s estate, Cragside, that once stood at the present location of the Haldane campus.

SAT 10
Quarry to Quarry GARRISON
10 a.m. Manisota | 584 Route 9D 845-424-3812 | visitmanisota.org
Take a guided, 1.5-mile moderate hike from the Quarry Pool at Dragon Rock to the wilderness of Lost Pond Quarry. Email touni@visitmanisota.org to register. Cost: $5

SAT 10
The Space Race: 1957-1975 PUTNAM VALLEY
10 a.m. Putnam Valley Library 30 Oscarsa Lake Road | 845-528-3242 putnamvalleylibrary.org
The Putnam Valley Historical Society will present a lecture by local historian and space enthusiast Kevin Woyce about the dramatic events that led to the first moon walk. Cost: $5 donation

SUN 11
Canning and Preserving COLD SPRING
1 – 4 p.m. Glynnwood Road Center 362 Glynwood Road | 845-265-3338 glynnwood.org
Michaela Hayes, a farmer and the founder of Crock & Jar, a food preservation company, will lead a hands-on process of using a hot-water bath to can sweet preserves and savory tomatoes. Cost: Pay what you can.

SUN 11
Get Lit Beacon BEACON
5 p.m. Oak Vino Wine Bar 389 Main St. | getlitbeacon.com
This month’s guest in the group’s reading series will be poet Catherine Arra, whose latest collection is Writing in the Ether.

SUN 11
Into the Woods GARRISON
7 p.m. St. Mary’s Church 1 Chestnut St. | 845-228-4167 doansburg.org
The ensemble – Christine Smith on flute, John Frisch on oboe, Susan LaFever on French horn, David Miller on bassoon and Alexander Negruța on clarinet – will perform Quintet Op. 56 No. 1 by Danzi, Pavanne by George, Trois Pieces Brees by Ibert and Romeoing Park Quintet by Kwazen, along with works by Grainger, Joplin and Sousa. Cost: $20 ($15, students, seniors)

TUES 6
Hudson Valley Jazz Fest SUGAR LOAF
6:30 p.m. Sugar Loaf Crossing 1405 Kings Highway hudsonvalleyjazzfest.org
The Hudson Valley Jazz Ensemble will open the four-day festival, now in its 16th year, which takes place at venues in Warwick, Ellenville, Monroe and other locales, including Newburgh (the Robert Kope Project at the Wherehouse at 9 p.m. on SAT 10) and Beacon (Shannon Early, Tom Deprisi and Lou Pappas at Chill Wine Bar at 4:30 p.m. on SAT 10). See the website for details. Also FRI 9, SAT 10, SUN 11.

SAT 10
Joe Louis Walker BEACON
8:30 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St. 845-855-1300 | townecrier.com
Walker, who is member of the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame and whose 2015 album, Everybody Wants a Piece, was nominated for a Grammy, has recorded with B.B. King, James Cotton, Bonnie Raitt, Taj Mahal, Bradson Marsalis and Ike Turner. Cost: $25 ($30 door)

SUN 11
Bernstein Bard Quartet BEACON
6:30 p.m. Inn and Spa at Beacon 151 Main St. | 845-205-2900 innandspabeacon.com
Take a free lesson at 6:30 p.m. and get ready to dance at 7 p.m. as part of the Dancing Under the Stars series. Cost: $20

SUN 11
Back to the Garden 1969 BEACON
7 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St. 845-855-1300 | townecrier.com
Hear the hits of the Woodstock era performed by seasoned musicians — one of whom attended the festival. Cost: $30 ($35 door)

STAGE & SCREEN
SAT 3
Ruth: A Musical Witness to Love GARRISON
2 & 7 p.m. Capuchin Ministries 781 Route 9D | 845-424-3609 glynwood.org
This musical about the Book of Ruth, performed by the teens attending the Catholic Liberal Arts Summer Program, is the third staged by Frari Erik Lenhart. Cost: $15

SAT 3
Into the Woods GARRISON
7:30 p.m. Boscobel | 1601 Route 9D 845-265-9575 | hvshakespeare.org
The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival presents its first musical, the Broadway hit and Tony Award winner that weaves together fractured fairy-tale favorites. Cost: $20 to $300

THURS 8
Hudson Valley Jazz Fest SUGAR LOAF
6:30 p.m. Sugar Loaf Crossing 1405 Kings Highway hudsonvalleyjazzfest.org
The Hudson Valley Jazz Ensemble will open the four-day festival, now in its 16th year, which takes place at venues in Warwick, Ellenville, Monroe and other locales, including Newburgh (the Robert Kope Project at the Wherehouse at 9 p.m. on SAT 10) and Beacon (Shannon Early, Tom Deprisi and Lou Pappas at Chill Wine Bar at 4:30 p.m. on SAT 10). See the website for details. Also FRI 9, SAT 10, SUN 11.

(Continued on Page 14)
Woodstock Trivia

Sharon Watts’ book includes a selection of tidbits about the festival, such as:

Granola was first introduced to the average American as part of Wavy Gravy’s announcement: “What we have in mind is breakfast in bed for 400,000!” It was served in paper cups.

Official Woodstock merchandise did not exist. No one made money on souvenirs, and T-shirts with the logo were only worn by the crew. Festival programs, discovered later in boxes, went mostly undistributed.

Watts will read from her book at the Howland Public Library on Aug. 13.
Nerds with Knives (and Booze)

Beacon bloggers serve up saucy cookbook

By Brian PJ Cronin

"I’d apologize for the chaos," says Matt Clifton, who blogs with his wife, Emily, as Nerds with Knives, as a dog scurries between our feet, chickens strut around snaking tomato vines, and cats stare longingly outside from the porch window. "But that would imply that it's temporary."

As publication day approaches for a cookbook that grew out of their blog, a whirlwind is not unexpected. But it’s also not the only thing the couple have going on. Emily works as a film editor and also not the only thing the couple have going on. Emily works as a film editor and spent the past two years cutting a documentary about gay women in southern music titled Invisible. ("We just got back from a surprise lesbian cruise in Alaska to screen the film," she says.) Matt works as an information technology consultant and maintains an expansive garden in the full summer heat. Yet they somehow found time to assemble Cork and Knife: Build Complex

Flavors with Bourbon, Wine, Beer and More. It will be released Tuesday, Aug. 6, and they’ll do a cooking demo and a signing at Utensil Cookware in Beacon on Saturday, Aug. 10, from 6 to 9 p.m. "We’ll have some treats," says Emily.

The blog started as a family project. The couple’s only major cooking endeavor was making Thanksgiving dinner, and each year, they couldn’t remember the details of what they had done the year before. That inspired the blog. As a test post, Matt, who is English, wrote an impassioned ode to his tea kettle. Emily followed up with a post about the importance of salt. "Both of our moms read it," Emily recalls.

Slowly the audience grew beyond their immediate families after their recipe for chicken with lime and cilantro went viral on the discussion site Reddit. The couple watched in amazement as dozens of people over the course of a weekend posted their own photos of the finished dish and wrote about how much they enjoyed it.

The thread caught the attention of J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, an editor at the food blog Serious Eats and author of The Food Lab. Lopez-Alt, whose work explores the scientific reasoning behind home cooking with a bit of humor, was drawn to the couple’s similar style. The Cliftons began blogging for Serious Eats, which put their work in front of an even larger audience.

“That was great training for us in terms of writing for people who really like to cook,” says Emily. “You can have your own voice, but it has to be informative. You can’t go off on a huge tangent. They want the recipe.”

The Cliftons’ expertise in explaining why certain recipes work so well isn’t limited to their own. When I noted that many disparate recipes I’ve returned to over the years — from tomato sauce to sesame chicken to pie crusts — that contain vodka, they were instantly able to tell me why.

“Vodka cooks off so quickly that it pulls up all the molecules of flavor and aroma,” explains Matt. “It makes everything pop.”

“That’s why it works in your tomato sauce,” says Emily.

“So it’s not a cake for children?”

“I don’t know,” she says. “It depends on how you feel about children.”

**Porterhouse Steak with Red Wine-Blue Cheese Butter**

By Emily and Matt Clifton

Making a compound butter is a quick and easy way to add a bright kick of flavor to a dish. This red wine-blue cheese version is as beautiful as it is delicious, with flecks of magenta shallots and blue-veined cheese. And it’s a great example of why red wine and cheese go so well together: when the astrignency of the wine meets the fullness of the fatty cheese, all your taste buds are taken care of at the same time. We love to melt it over steaks, but it’s equally good on baked potatoes and grilled or steamed vegetables.

Serves 2 to 4

For the red-wine butter:
2 sticks (16 tablespoons) unsalted butter, room temperature, divided
2 medium shallots, minced (about ¼ cup)
1 small garlic clove, minced or grated
1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
½ cup plus 1 tablespoon red wine, divided
2 tablespoons fresh-chopped chives
¼ cup blue cheese crumbles, very cold
Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper
1 Porterhouse steak (or any steak you like), at least 1 inch thick, brought to room temperature
1 teaspoon neutral oil, like grapeseed

Method:
To make the red-wine butter, set a small, heavy saucepan over medium heat and melt 1 tablespoon butter. Add the shallots and garlic and sauté until soft, 5 minutes. Don’t let the shallots brown; lower the heat if they begin to darken. Add the vinegar and ¼ cup of the wine and simmer until there is just about a tablespoon of liquid left, about 10 minutes. Transfer the shallot-wine mixture into a small bowl and place in the refrigerator until cold, about 10 minutes.

Add the softened butter to the bowl of a stand mixer, then add the shallot-wine mixture and the last tablespoon of uncooked red wine. Mix on low until the butter is fully combined with the liquid (this can also be done by hand, with a little patience). Then, use a rubber spatula to gently fold in the chives and blue cheese. Try to keep some of the cheese in chunks. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Place a sheet of plastic wrap on a work surface. Spoon the butter lengthwise at one end of the plastic wrap and roll into a log about 1½ inches in diameter. Twist the ends of the plastic wrap on both sides to close and tighten the cylinder. Refrigerate it for at least 2 hours before cutting. The butter can be refrigerated for 1 week, or frozen up to 3 months.

To cook the steak, dry it well and season both sides generously with salt and pepper. Heat a large heavy skillet on medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the oil and lay in the steak. Cook it on one side, without disturbing, until it releases easily from the pan when you lift it, about 3 minutes. Then turn the steak every 2 minutes, until brown on both sides and cooked to your desired temperature (125 degrees for medium rare). Place the steak on a cutting board, top with a few rounds of butter and cover loosely with foil. Allow steak to rest for 10 minutes before slicing and serving.

Note: Porterhouse — comprising strip steak, filet mignon and the adjoining T-bone — is a decadent treat, but you can really use any kind of steak you like. Hanger, Flat Iron and flap steaks are also great choices.

**Recipe**

**Porterhouse Steak with Red Wine-Blue Cheese Butter**

**For the red-wine butter:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsalted butter</td>
<td>2 sticks (16 tablespoons)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shallots</td>
<td>2 medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>1 small</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-wine vinegar</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red wine</td>
<td>½ cup plus 1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh-chopped chives</td>
<td>2 tablespoons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue cheese crumbles</td>
<td>¼ cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosher salt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Freshly cracked black pepper</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porterhouse steak</td>
<td>1 (or any steak you like, at least 1 inch thick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral oil</td>
<td>1 teaspoon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Method:**

1. To make the red-wine butter, melt 1 tablespoon butter in a small, heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallots and garlic and sauté until soft, 5 minutes. Don’t let the shallots brown; lower the heat if they begin to darken. Add the vinegar and ¼ cup of the wine and simmer until there is just about a tablespoon of liquid left, about 10 minutes. Transfer the shallot-wine mixture into a small bowl and place in the refrigerator until cold, about 10 minutes.

2. Add the softened butter to the bowl of a stand mixer, then add the shallot-wine mixture and the last tablespoon of uncooked red wine. Mix on low until the butter is fully combined with the liquid (this can also be done by hand, with a little patience). Then, use a rubber spatula to gently fold in the chives and blue cheese. Try to keep some of the cheese in chunks. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

3. Place a sheet of plastic wrap on a work surface. Spoon the butter lengthwise at one end of the plastic wrap and roll into a log about 1½ inches in diameter. Twist the ends of the plastic wrap on both sides to close and tighten the cylinder. Refrigerate it for at least 2 hours before cutting. The butter can be refrigerated for 1 week, or frozen up to 3 months.

4. To cook the steak, dry it well and season both sides generously with salt and pepper. Heat a large heavy skillet on medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the oil and lay in the steak. Cook it on one side, without disturbing, until it releases easily from the pan when you lift it, about 3 minutes. Then turn the steak every 2 minutes, until brown on both sides and cooked to your desired temperature (125 degrees for medium rare). Place the steak on a cutting board, top with a few rounds of butter and cover loosely with foil. Allow steak to rest for 10 minutes before slicing and serving.

Note: Porterhouse — comprising strip steak, filet mignon and the adjoining T-bone — is a decadent treat, but you can really use any kind of steak you like. Hanger, Flat Iron and flap steaks are also great choices.
Native Plants from Past to Present

By Pamela Doan

To people who don’t know a lot about plants, I seem to know a lot about plants. I have big holes in my self-sought education, however, and identifying plants is one such area. I just want someone to tell me. That’s my preferred method. But there’s not always someone around who knows.

My phone apps fail me. Mugwort is not a cannabis, iPhone. I take cuttings and use them. Not always someone around who knows.

I was inspired by a visit to Boscobel to try drawing. When I stopped by to talk with Executive Director Jennifer Carlquist about their revisions of the rose garden, she mentioned they had used the plant lists of Jane Colden as reference. Colden (1722-1766), known as America’s first female botanist, carefully illustrated a catalogue of plants on her family’s 3,000-acre estate near Newburgh during an exciting time in botany. By the time of her death, she had completed 340 ink outlines.

The Dyckman mansion at Boscobel would have had many of the same plants Colden catalogued at its original location in Montrose. With the help of a team of researchers and consultants, Boscobel was able to work on a new landscape plan for the difficult-to-maintain and historically inaccurate rose garden. “The plans merge history, design, culture and climate,” Carlquist said. “The roses needed constant spraying and upkeep.”

Colden’s manuscript and historical documents about landscapes at other significant homes from the late 18th and early 19th century gave the team a working list of plants. While the current reinvention is temporary while fundraising and other renovations happen at Boscobel, the plantings are pollinator-friendly and more resilient to the extreme weather brought on by climate change.

In 1755, while Colden was sketching the plants on her family’s estate, she corresponded with John Bartram, a Philadelphia gardener who had created the most varied collection of North American plants of the time; Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist who created the common Linnaean system for plant taxonomy; and Johan Frederik Gronovius, a Dutch botanist who published Flora Virginica in 1743.

She exchanged seeds and cuttings for identification in the beginnings of the field of study. It was an exciting time for plant lovers. When Linnaeus published Species Plantarum in 1753, it included more than 700 North American species and 70 that were new to science. Some were contributed by Colden.

In the Botanic Manuscript of Jane Colden 1724-1756, published by the Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties, I found many of the native plants that I and many other gardeners are trying to bring back to the landscape. Some of my favorites — turtlehead (Chelone glabra), cardinal flower (Lobelia cardinalis), coneflower (Rudbeckia triloba), butterflyweed (Asclepias tuberosa) and vervain (Verbena hastata) — are carefully drawn and described.

Colden’s observations reveal both her status and connection to the plants. Her notes on snake root (Aristolochia serpentaria) read, “This Steneca Snake Root is much used by some physicians in America, principally in Long Island, in the Fevers, especially when it inclines to Peripneumony, they give it either in powder or decoction. The usual dose of the powder is 30 grains.”

Snake root extract is still sold as an herbal remedy, but the plant is considered to be endangered and possibly extinct in our area. It’s out of fashion for landscaping, lost to development and out-competed by invasive species. But as a host plant for the pipevine swallowtail butterfly, it’s worth planting and conserving in your yard.

Boscobel’s interim planting includes yarrow (Achillea), vervain (Verbena hastata), eveline speedwell (Veronica spicata), and summersweet (Clethra alnifolia), among others. All are easy to cultivate and maintain, will bloom during their busiest summer season, and will ease the transition for visitors who will miss the rose garden. “We want to highlight what our ancestors knew about the connection between sustainability and history,” Carlquist explained.

When people were concerned about colonial tensions and raising their own food, tending roses wouldn’t have been a high priority. Again, it seems like so much has changed, but not much and listening to messages from history makes sense.
Nelsonville Gobblesmacked by Pet

*Turkey a favorite with neighbors, passersby*

By Michael Turton

Hamlet, Nelsonville’s celebrity turkey, seems headed for a much better fate than the character for whom he is named.

Slated to be the centerpiece of a Thanksgiving meal, the 2-year-old red bourbon is instead the pride and joy of a Nelsonville couple, Suzy Kee and Dave Mattson.

The gobbler can be seen, almost daily, happily strolling along the shoulder of Main Street on the upper east side of the village. In true Shakespearean fashion, tragedy preceded the heritage-breed’s carefree life.

A few years ago, Kee and Mattson purchased two red bourbons — a tom, or male, they named Tom, and a hen they called Henrietta. The pair produced two poults, Hamlet and an unnamed hen. Unfortunately, Hamlet’s parents and sister were lost to coyotes.

Kee says that, after seeing Hamlet, neighbors and passersby began stopping in to ask about him and the couple granted him a pardon from ending up as dinner. “We just couldn’t do it,” Kee said.

“He’s been roaming for about a year now,” she said. “We’ve spoken to our neighbors and they think he’s cool,” although he occasionally leaves a deposit on their porches.

She has asked neighbors not to feed Hamlet to ensure he sees their home as his sole source of food and water. His diet includes fruit such as grapes and cherries, vegetables and poultry feed. He also has a taste for black soldier fly larvae and other bugs that he grubs in the yard.

This turkey is not lacking in personality. Kee describes Hamlet as a peeping tom.

“If he goes up onto your porch and the screen door is closed, he’ll stand there, peering in at you and your pets,” she said. “He’s a people turkey, he likes following people; he’s a social satellite” who mimics people when they laugh.

Hamlet has his moods. Kee explained that when the skin on his featherless head turns red, it signals anger. When it’s blue, he’s annoyed. When it’s white, he’s outraged.

Mattson said Hamlet sometimes resents being locked in his enclosure at night and clearly displays anger when he is released in the morning. “If you penned him up all day, he’d be miserable,” he said.

Like many pets, Hamlet knows his own name and comes when called.

Hamlet, the turkey takes a gander.

Dropping in on the neighbors is part of Hamlet’s daily routine. He also often follows pedestrians who happen by on Main Street. On his own, he will wander several hundred yards, including down to the ice cream shop and bakery.

Each night, he sleeps in the same spot inside his enclosure next to the backyard chicken coop. The enclosure, Mattson said, prevents any nocturnal wanderings.

Mattson, who is retired, spends most of his days at home with Hamlet. “He follows me around all day,” he said, whether he’s working in the garden or sitting on the front porch.

Mattson and Kee are not overly concerned about traffic hazards. “We have two Turkey Crossing signs,” Kee noted, adding that people stop up to five times a day to have a closer look at their pet. Often, she said, cars will slow, with the occupants shouting a greeting as the turkey waddles down the road. “We just wish people wouldn’t drive 40 miles an hour.”

Mattson said Hamlet never darts onto the road. “He’s a slow walker.” He laughed recalling a resident who expressed concern about a photo posted on Facebook of Hamlet standing in the middle of the road.

“What they failed to see,” Mattson said, “was he had just helped an elderly woman across the road and was on his way home.”

Hamlet is fortunate to have ended up as a pet. Kee said red bourbons are considered “the epicurean epitome” of flavorful turkey. “Dressed, he would go for about $12 a pound,” she said.

Red bourbon toms can weigh up to 33 pounds, and hens 18 pounds.

Hamlet’s fame may soon be even greater. Kee and Mattson have entered him in the poultry competition (red bourbon division) at the 174th annual Dutchess County Fair, which begins Aug. 20 in Rhinebeck.
Gun Control

Gov. Andrew Cuomo often boasts about New York “enacting the strongest gun laws in the nation.” Here are five laws he signed in July.

Moving gun
This law, enacted on July 16, requires gun owners who transport a pistol or revolver to shooting ranges or competitions to unload the weapon and store it in a locked container — excluding the glove box — during transport, with ammo carried separately. (There is one exception: New York City law bans anyone from bringing a handgun into the city without authorization from the police.) The state argues that the law makes moot a lawsuit by the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association over a New York City law that bans its residents from transporting handguns to homes, shooting ranges or competitions outside city limits. In January, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal after a lower court ruled it did not violate the Second Amendment.

Passed Senate 36-23
Serino •
Passed Assembly 99-49
Galef • Jacobson •

Bump-stock ban
Cuomo on July 29 signed a law that bans the sale or possession of bump stocks, which accelerate the rate at which semi-automatic weapons can be fired. (State law had banned attaching a bump stock to a weapon, but not owning or selling one.) On March 26, a federal rule went into effect classifying firearms with bump stocks as illegal machine guns. Before that, bump stocks had been considered gun “accessories” not subject to regulation. The Justice Department says only one company was still making bump stocks by late 2018 but that an estimated 280,000 to 520,000 were sold in the U.S. from 2010 to 2017.

Passed Senate 49-14
Serino •
Passed Assembly 134-11
Galef • Jacobson •

3D guns
Cuomo signed legislation on July 30 criminalizing the manufacture, sale, transport and possession of firearms that are undetectable by a metal detector, such as those made with 3D printers.

Passed Senate 53-5
Serino •
Passed Assembly 122-22
Galef • Jacobson •

Armed teachers
Cuomo on July 30 enacted legislation that bans schools from authorizing anyone but a school resource officer, law enforcement officer or security guard to carry a firearm on the grounds of any school, including colleges and universities, or on a school bus. The bill was introduced in response to suggestions after the killings at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in 2018 that teachers be allowed to carry concealed weapons. “The answer to the gun violence epidemic plaguing this country has never been and never will be more guns,” Cuomo said in a statement.

Passed Senate 41-22
Serino •
Passed Assembly 104-40
Galef • Jacobson •

Marijuana fines
This law, which takes effect on Aug. 28, reduces the penalty for possession of less than two ounces of marijuana from a misdemeanor to a violation punishable by a fine. It also creates a process for some people who have been convicted of marijuana misdemeanors to have their arrests expunged.

The possession of a small amount of weed (23 grams or less) for personal use has been a violation since 1977 unless an officer determined that the marijuana was “in public view” or “burning.” Lawmakers argue the bill will correct a racial injustice, noting that in 2015 in New York City, nearly 90 percent of those arrested and charged with misdemeanors were black or Latino while federal data indicates young white men are far more likely to possess and use weed.

The law means that anyone caught with a small amount of marijuana will not be arrested but instead face a fine of $50 or, if the person is smoking in a public place in public view or the blunt is lit, a fine of up to $200.

Passed Senate 39-23
Serino •
Passed Assembly 94-44
Galef • Jacobson •

Former Vice President Al Gore (left) joined Gov. Andrew Cuomo on July 18 for the signing of a comprehensive climate-change law.

Climate bill
Former Vice President Al Gore joined Cuomo on July 18 as the governor signed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which includes the ambitious goal of 70 percent of the state’s electricity coming from renewables by 2030 and an 85 percent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050.

Among other provisions, the law establishes a 22-person climate-action council to make recommendations and gives state agencies authority to adopt greenhouse-gas regulations. It also requires the Department of Environmental Conservation to consider climate change when it issues rulings.

“Signing this law is a historic and a vital step, but we must execute also, especially when the goals we set may outlast the tenure of some of the people setting the goals,” Cuomo said at the signing. “That is not to say that I don’t intend to be governor in 2050. I do. But some of the other state officials may not be around. So government’s challenge is to also implement the plan... And that is the art form: to develop a sustainable, achievable environmental agenda that does not disrupt our economy.”

Passed Senate 41-21
Serino •
Passed Assembly 111-35
Galef • Jacobson •

Farm worker rights
Cuomo on July 17 signed a law that gives farmworkers overtime pay, one day off per week and benefits such as disability, worker’s compensation, paid family leave and unemployment insurance.

The law, which takes effect on Jan. 1, also provides farm laborers with collective bargaining rights; provides for a 60-hour work week; requires that sanitary codes apply to all worker housing; removes a payroll threshold for requiring employers to obtain workers’ comp coverage; and requires that workplace injuries be reported to employers.

“The signing of this bill sets right 80 years of wrongs done by a racist, Jim Crow-era law that denied farmworkers basic rights,” said Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

Passed Senate 40-22
Serino •
Passed Assembly 94-54
Galef • Jacobson •

Hair rights
On July 12, Cuomo signed a law making

(Continued on Page 19)
Bullying in public schools

On July 25, Cuomo signed legislation that extends state human rights laws to cover public schools, allowing the Division of Human Rights to investigate bullying, harassment or other forms of discrimination. The bill was introduced in response to a 2012 court decision that said that “educational institutions” included in the state Human Rights Law did not include public schools.

Passed Senate 61-0
Serino
Passed Assembly 142-0
Galef

Data protection

Cuomo on July 25 signed a law billed by supporters as an update to existing “breach notification” regulations. It expands the definition of digital data that businesses should protect to include biometrics and email addresses/user names with passwords and security questions; updates the notification requirements to include anyone living in New York state, not just those who “conduct business” here; and requires businesses to have “reasonable data security.” The law takes effect on March 21, 2020.

Passed Senate 41-21
Serino
Passed Assembly 147-1
Galef

Salary history

On July 10, Cuomo enacted a law designed to prevent “wage discrimination” goes into effect on Jan. 6.

Passed Senate 52-9
Serino
Passed Assembly 120-26
Galef

Raising tobacco age

On July 16, Cuomo signed a bill raising the minimum age to buy cigarettes and e-cigarettes from 18 to 21. It takes effect on Nov. 13.

Passed Senate 46-16
Serino
Assembly passed 130-10
Galef

Cat declawing

On July 22, New York became the first state to ban the declawing of cats. Known as onychectomy, the procedure involves removing most or all of the last bone of each of the toes of the front feet, severing tendons, nerves and ligaments. Supporters noted that claws are vital to cats for climbing, maintaining balance and to defend themselves.

Passed Senate 43-19
Serino
Passed Assembly 126-20
Galef

Pets in cars

On July 31, Cuomo enacted a law that allows firefighters and other emergency medical responders to remove pets found in unattended vehicles if they believe the animals are in danger due to extreme heat or cold. Police officers are also authorized to remove animals in those situations.

Passed Senate 62-0
Serino
Passed Assembly 148-0
Galef

How They Voted (from Page 18)

it illegal to discriminate based on “traits historically associated with race, including but not limited to hair texture and protective hairstyles.”

The bill’s sponsor in the Senate, Jamaal Bailey (D-Bronx), noted that the New York City Commission on Human Rights in February released guidelines on “race discrimination on the basis of hair” that outlined the rights of people to maintain their “natural hair, treated or untreated hairstyles such as loos, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots, fades, Afros, and/or the right to keep hair in an uncut or untrimmed state.”

Bailey cited national incidents reported in the media such as a high school wrestler in New Jersey who was forced to cut his hair or forfeit a match; a 6-year-old boy in Florida turned away from a private Christian academy because his hair reached below his ears; and a New Orleans girl sent home from a Catholic school for wearing braids.

Passed Senate 62-0
Serino
Passed Assembly 113-31
Galef

Passed Senate 43-19
Serino
Passed Assembly 126-20
Galef

Passed Senate 52-9
Serino
Passed Assembly 120-26
Galef

Passed Senate 46-16
Serino
Assembly passed 130-10
Galef

Passed Assembly 142-0
Galef

Passed Assembly 147-1
Galef

Passed Senate 41-21
Serino
Passed Assembly 147-1
Galef

Passed Senate 60-1
Serino
Passed Assembly 127-21
Galef

Passed Senate 59-0
Serino
Passed Assembly 146-0
Galef

This feature is designed as a counterweight to all the bad news in the world that weighs people down. We could share a photo of a baby, or a photo of a dog, but we are giving you both. How many newspapers can say that? Emmett Christensen, with Wiley, is the son of Jennifer Cotenecc Christensen of Kansas City (formerly of Cold Spring) and her husband, Garrett. If you have a photo of a baby and a dog, submit it for consideration to editor@highlandscurrent.org.

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Danskammer (from Page 1)

The new plant, Reid said, would use fracked gas to run more regularly and more efficiently once Indian Point closes in 2021. It would be fast-starting and air-cooled, rather than water-cooled. Its construction would be privately funded, he said.

However, the plant would fall short of New York’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), which calls for net zero carbon emissions from the generation of electricity by 2040. Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the act into law on July 18 (see Page 18).

At the Monday meeting, ‘“[T]he intent of this law is to reaching and urged it be revised. As written, it said, “the intent of this law is to stop leaks and effectively place a gag order on county officials and employees.”

On Thursday (Aug. 1), Montgomery linked the “confidential” road signs response to a series of ongoing “retaliatory tactics” by county officials “to limit my ability to assist and respond” to residents and said the incident “shows how this law will hurt the public.”

The response “was marked confidential” without clear reason and prevented me from delivering public information vital to general business operations,” she said. “The law will directly impact my capacity to serve” and “impair all legislators’ abilities to assist constituents.” She added that Odell “signed a flawed law. This is not government and the citizens of Putnam County deserve better.”

The law states that communications by, or to, or from the county Law Department, the Legislature’s attorney or a county “outside legal counsel or consultant shall be presumed to be confidential even if not explicitly labeled ‘confidential.’” While acknowledging that legal records involving attorney-client privilege, “deliberative process privilege,” or work by lawyers might sometimes be disclosed, the law says that all nine legislators must agree to their release.

It further decrees that no one in county government can “disclose, distribute, transmit, forward, publicize, deliver, disseminate or describe” something deemed confidential — whether papers or a report, statement, memo, folder, pamphlet, book, draft, drawing, map, photo, letter, electronic-media message, disk, tape, regulation, code, opinion or similar item.

In her note to the Legislature, Odell recommended that it remove a paragraph from the law that allows any county employee, outside legal counsel or consultant to slap “confidential” on something he or she creates or transmits. Such material is already protected by state law, she said. Nonetheless, she signed the law with that provision intact.

During the hearing, the Legislature’s legal counsel, Robert Firriolo, read a statement from the eight Republican legislators, who defended the law. In it, they maintained that the law “does not create any new type of confidential record which may be withheld from the public” and “does not allow any county employee to stamp ‘confidential’ on a record and turn it into a ‘secret.’” In fact, the statement said, “the word secret doesn’t even appear anywhere in the law.”

According to the statement, making a document “confidential” merely advises an employee to deal with it carefully. The statement also noted that “numerous state and federal laws” require confidentiality and provided examples of information it said is kept confidential in Putnam County such as “employees’ dates of birth; names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of the public and county employees” and “numerous types of private, personal information of members of the public who interact with the county in a wide variety of ways, such as people applying for a trade or business license.”

However, it was not clear if all of the items listed can be withheld in every circumstance under state or federal law.

Further, the legislators declared that if a question arises “about whether a record should be produced or withheld in response to a FOIL request, the county code will still favor disclosure to the public.”

Public hearing
At the hearing, residents from across the county criticized the law.

Tempa Muller, a Phillipstown resident and long-time planning consultant to munic-
Putnam Hands Off WIC Program

Legislature holds special meeting for vote

By Holly Crocco

The Putnam County Legislature discontinued and defunded a federal program for poor women and their children, opting for a nonprofit community agency to run it instead, during a special meeting called on July 24. The vote was 7-2, with Nancy Montgomery (D-Phillipstown) and William Gouldman (R-Putnam Valley) voting “no.”

Putnam has been administering the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC, for 15 years. It is partially funded through a matching state grant of about $437,000. In 2018, the county fronted an additional $120,000 to cover program costs.

A five-year grant contract with the state is set to expire in 2020, but the Legislature voted to end the program Sept. 30 of this year. The WIC program will be taken over by Open Door Family Medical Centers, which operates a community health center in Brewster.

Montgomery said she opposed ending the contract early, and also was not happy that the Legislature called a special meeting for the vote, saying it “will leave the public with the impression that we have rushed or otherwise short-circuited public process in our decision-making.”

Legislature Chair Joseph Castellano (R-Brewster) said the meeting was necessary because two legislators will not be able to attend the regular monthly meeting scheduled for Aug. 6.

“It is such an important issue that all nine legislators should be here, and I’m thankful that all nine did show up,” he said.

Montgomery, however, accused her colleagues of calling the special meeting two weeks before the regular meeting because the state has already promised funding to Open Door, and there’s a timeline for them to receive it.

“I don’t believe that we’re holding this special meeting because two legislators can’t make it,” she said. “I believe we have an obligation to the state and to the clients — the WIC clients — and to get messages out to them in a timely manner, and I think that’s unfortunate.”

Montgomery also pointed out that one of the four full-time county employees losing a job is a one year away from fulfilling a 20-year tenure to retire with a full pension.

“We’re cheating an employee out of her retirement, which is unnecessary,” she said. “It’s a crummy way to treat our employees. Why can’t we fill out our contract? We have a year left. It would be a cleaner transition.”

Toni Addonizio (R-Kent) said she took offense to the implication that legislators “don’t care” about county employees.

“The loss of jobs is very important to me,” she said, noting that the Personnel Department is working to find jobs for displaced employees.

Ginny Nacerino (R-Patterson) added that county employees are very valued.

“The people I talk to are very thankful to have civil service jobs, benefits and live and work in Putnam County — which is a rarity,” she said. “This is a bedroom community and most people have to commute out.”

Nacerino added that Open Door can better serve WIC clients. “We are doing the right thing for the right reasons,” she said.

Amy Sayegh (R-Mahopac Falls) noted that the county’s client base for the WIC program has declined, and state funding is not covering all expenses.

“This will be going further and further down the hole, and we’re not serving the populations that we’re trying to serve,” she said.

Neal Sullivan (R-Mahopac) said the implication that the county rushed the decision was bogus. “I don’t think we’ve discussed an issue more since I’ve been a legislator,” he said.

Auditor: Putnam on Strong Footing

Legislature hears reassuring report about finances

By Holly Crocco

A “glowing” audit of the county’s fiscal standing by the PFK O’Connor Davies firm was presented to the county Legislature at its July 24 Audit Committee meeting.

Partner Nick DeSantis explained that the county earned a certificate of achievement in financial reporting from the national Government Finance Officers Association.

“I’d like everyone to know that in the State of New York, excluding the City of New York, there are 57 counties; there are only nine counties that received this award, and Putnam is one of them,” he said.

DeSantis added that the certificate helps in any borrowing the county may wish to do “because the rating agencies look favorably upon any municipality that can compile the information that you compiled and present it for evaluation.”

He complimented the county on its borrowing practices, pointing out that it does not rely on tax anticipation notes or revenue anticipation notes. “It’s important to note that you do not have any short-term liabilities (debt),” he said.

Outstanding bonds total $79.7 million, with principal and interest estimated at $6.9 million.

According to another partner, Allan Kassay, the county’s unassigned fund balance is $29.2 million, which is about 16 percent of its 2019 budget. Since 2015, the fund balance has increased from $12.5 million.

“So it’s almost a $10 million increase over the past four years,” he said.

DeSantis added that the county’s financial managers did well, considering the recession that took place in 2008.

“As a result of you building up your fund balance to a level that enabled you to avoid short-term borrowing, you’re actually saving the taxpayers money because you’re not paying interest on short-term borrowing, so the short-term management of county resources has been handled very well,” DeSantis explained.

Transferring excess funds into a capital project fund instead of borrowing, thereby saving interest and issuance costs, added to the county’s strong fund balance and lack of short-term debt, he said.

Putnam has an Aa2 rating from Moody’s Investors Service, which is defined by “obligations judged to be of high quality and subject to very low credit risk,” said DeSantis.

When it comes to sales tax, revenue was up $4.5 million from the previous year, representing an increase of 7.6 percent, according to Kassay.

Legislator Neal Sullivan (R-Mahopac) commended the county’s finance team, led by Commissioner Bill Carlin Jr., as well as County Executive MaryEllen Odell.

“I’d like everyone to know that in the State of New York, excluding the City of New York, there are 57 counties; there are only nine counties that received this award, and Putnam is one of them.”

~ Auditor Nick DeSantis

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Secret Putnam (from Page 20) polities, said that when he became Philipstown’s planner in 1990, he was “stunned” by “various shenanigans” that occurred, including private discussions among town officials, influential residents and developers pursuing “their own personal interests.”

As Philipstown’s planner for 19 years, “I did my best to be transparent” and “never once considered labeling anything ‘confidential,’ even if I knew that the public may disagree with me and criticize me or even ridicule me at public hearings or in local papers,” he said.

Miller objected that Putnam’s law allows consultants, along with officials and employees, “to willy-nilly declare any or all material “confidential, and, therefore, hide it from public view. Not only is this inconsistent with New York State law and likely to be challenged, it is a sad statement about the morality, transparency and openness of our own county government.”

Linda Kagan, an attorney and a board member of the Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce, argued that “transparency is the hallmark of good governance. And, in a democracy, it is essential.”

Attempting “to expand the ability to remove documents created for county government and its citizens by making them ‘confidential’ without a proper basis and at its worst dangerous.”

Scott Reing of Carmel, who chairs the Democratic Party in Putnam but who said he spoke as an individual, similarly warned that the law “is arbitrary and capricious” and potentially unconstitutional. “A local law cannot supersede state or federal law,” he said.

The Carmel-Kent Chamber of Commerce, too, opposed the law, saying its members “do not see this as having viability” and believe it would foster an “undue” financial burden on taxpayers as the county defends a law “that should not have been made in the first place.”

The Putnam County League of Women Voters; Common Cause New York, which promotes government accountability; and the New York News Publishers Association (of which The Current is a member) also submitted statements opposing the law.

Gun owners On its website, the Putnam County Firearm Owners’ Association urged its members to support the law and arrive at the hearing early, because “the liberals plan to pack the house.” The group said that the law helps ensure “that our pistol-permit applications and gun-related documents can be protected from being published by anti-freedom newspapers and other anti-2A (Second Amendment) organizations.”

At the hearing, several attendees cited the law’s importance to gun owners. “I trust county government.” said Steve Clarifilla, a former police officer. “I don’t want my private information available to possible terrorist groups, criminals or other crazies.” (Gun licenses are public records under state law but license holders can keep their information confidential in certain circumstances. See Page 20.)

“I don’t share the paranoia of residents of Cold Spring and Philipstown,” said a Kent gun owner. “I trust county government.”

Marilyn Miller of Brewster said those who oppose the law err in considering state laws sufficient to protect privacy — “just look to the other side of the county,” where in 2018 Philipstown adopted a law on firearm storage. She referred to the “uproar” as baffling. “We are a constitutional republic, not a democracy,” she said. “A democracy is mob rule.”
7-Day Forecast for the Highlands

Saturday 84/64
Partly sunny and humid; a stray afternoon t-storm

Sunday 86/60
Partly sunny

Monday 84/63
 Plenty of sunshine

Tuesday 83/65
 Intervals of clouds and sunshine

Wednesday 89/66
 Intervals of clouds and sunshine

Thursday 85/64
 More clouds than sunshine

Friday 83/66
 Turning cloudy

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SUN & MOON
Sunrise Sat., 8/3 5:52 AM
Sunset Sat. night, 8/3 8:11 PM
Moonrise Sat., 8/3 8:44 AM
Moonset Sat., 8/3 10:13 PM

First  Full  Last  New
Aug 7  Aug 15  Aug 23  Aug 30

Answers for July 26 Puzzles

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The Beacon Bulldogs travel baseball team for players ages 10 and younger closed out its summer season last week, picking up a 12-3 win over the Northern Dutchess Rebels on Sunday (July 21) after dropping a 9-3 decision to the Marlboro Marlins the previous Friday evening in Milton.

The Bulldogs compete in the Greater Hudson Valley Baseball League, which includes players from ages 8 to 23. There are 37 teams in its league.

In Sunday’s win over the Rebels, Connor Varricchio started for the Bulldogs and went three innings on the mound to pick up the victory. Julian Rivers pitched the last three frames.

“Both of them did a great job for us,” said Manager Jed Varricchio. “They made pitches and kept their composure on a hot day. Both grinded it out and did well staying loose. They didn’t let anything bother them.”

Nolan Varricchio went 3-for-4 with one RBI, Jayden Concepción was 3-for-4 with two RBI, Hudson Fontaine and Jayden Lassiter each drove in two runs, and Aiden Heaton went 2-for-3 with one RBI.

“Aiden had two stolen bases and a real nice game,” Varricchio said. “Hudson also ran the bases well, and so did Justin Buchman. I was happy with our defense. We limited our errors, and our offense woke up and hit the ball.”

The Bulldogs (4-5) came up on the short end against Milton, with Heaton taking the loss on the mound.

Varricchio went 3-for-4 with two RBI, and Parker White drove in a run. “We played good defense, but the Marlins hit the ball,” Varricchio said. “And they threw a lefty [pitcher] at us, which we sometimes struggle with.”

Nonetheless, the coach said he was happy with the team’s progress.

“We are a team of 9-year-olds in a 10-year-old division, and we still won a bunch of games” against talented teams, he said.

The Bulldogs and a few other teams in the league opted not to compete in the league playoffs. The Beacon Maulers, a squad of 12-year-olds who finished 5-6, were upset in the first round of their league tournament by Ossining.

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