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A Special Supplement to
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ELECTION 2017 GUIDE
Toni Addonizio

After serving one term on the county Legislature, Toni Addonizio is looking to retain her seat that she won in 2014. Going door to door like she did during her first campaign, she's received a positive response.

Addonizio Looks to Retain Seat Against Tolmach

By David Propper

Legislator Toni Addonizio, a Republican, looks to retain her seat representing district 3 against Democrat Phil Tolmach. The legislative district 3 seat represents parts of Kent and Patterson. The term runs for three years.

‘I do my due diligence and I never make a decision unless I thoroughly investigate every situation and that’s how I come to my conclusions through research.’

Addonizio, a lifelong Kent resident, said she’s used her position as the chairperson of the economic development committee, Addonizio said she is proud to have helped move businesses, that have a minimal negative impact on the environment. He also wants to see tourism the primary focus in the county considering it’s the top industry in Putnam currently.

He'd like to see the county work with towns to find ways to organize assets that can be showcased for tourism. Those tourism locations need to be enhanced, he argued. In Kent, Tolmach noted there are several different landmarks like stone chambers and Mt. Ninnam that can be better promoted.

‘Maybe we can organize some kind of bus trip that goes from one site to another site,” he said. “We could organize music festivals. I see music festivals all over.

‘Why can’t we have one here.’

As someone who worked in Manhattan in the arts industry, Tolmach said he has contacts and that might attract them up to Putnam. He would also like to see an effort to clean lakes throughout the county, noting it's important to the health of residents.

When asked about the job performance of current lawmaker Toni Addonizio, Tolmach had a blunt assessment.

I will be more responsive to their desires and their needs because I won’t be afraid to ask the tough questions. I’ll try to prod the rest of the legislature to do the right thing.

And Tolmach wasn’t much impressed with the entire lawmaking body, claiming legislators are too afraid to do anything. He said there has been a reduction of county services and lawmakers don’t connect with others outside of their “bubble.” He panned the pay raise that lawmakers wanted, calling it “absurd.”

‘There’s no sense of leadership that comes from any member of the legislature,’ Tolmach said.

Tolmach is on the Kent planning board and has been on it for nine years. He’s a 30-year resident of the town.

‘I’m the more intelligent candidate,’ Tolmach said on why voters should select him. “Because I will do more, because I will be more responsive to their desires and their needs because I won’t be afraid to ask the tough questions. I’ll try to prod the rest of the legislature to do the right thing.”

Phil Tolmach

Why can’t we have one here.”

As someone who worked in Manhattan in the arts industry, Tolmach said he has contacts and that might attract them up to Putnam. He would also like to see an effort to clean lakes throughout the county, noting it's important to the health of residents.

When asked about the job performance of current lawmaker Toni Addonizio, Tolmach had a blunt assessment.

‘As far as I can tell she hasn’t done anything,” Tolmach said, adding she doesn’t speak up enough.
By Anna Young

William Gouldman, the Republican incumbent representing Legislative District #2, takes on Democratic challenger Anthony Williams. The legislative seat represents much of Putnam Valley and a small slice of Carmel. The term runs for three years.

William Gouldman

First-term incumbent William Gouldman said the county Legislature has made great strides and he wants to continue to make Putnam County a better place.

"I want to continue to be a voice for my constituents and keep Putnam County moving forward," the Republican candidate said.

During his first term, Gouldman said how to start a business or expand a small business; coordinated several Putnam Valley town clean up days; organized unclaimed fund events for the state comptroller's office to analyze if residents had unclaimed funds; and set up a child safety ID program that takes photos, fingerprint prints and personal information of children for their parents.

"My three years in office have given me the opportunity to work with a group of people whose vision is the same as mine, to make Putnam County the best it can be," the 23-year Putnam Valley resident said. "It allowed me to be a voice for my constituents, responding to requests, completing jobs that were started before my term began, offering information to better their lives and more."

Gouldman, a small business owner, added that infrastructure and taxes are the most important issues challenging the county, stating that officials are working to build up the infrastructure of Putnam Valley and the county.

He added that continuing to improve infrastructure could attract new businesses and allow current businesses to thrive.

"In the spring we will begin repaving Peekskill Hollow Road, putting in sidewalks, fixing the bridge at Peekskill Hollow and Oscawana Lake Roads, adding a few new parking spaces in the business district as well as replacing the traffic lights in Putnam Valley," Gouldman said.

Gouldman also believes the county budget was reasonable, aside from the $5,000 increase in legislative salaries, which he voted against.

If reelected, Gouldman said he will dedicate himself to making the community a great place to live and work. He added that he will remain in contact with constituents ensuring they are well informed on subjects that will assist them with their day-to-day activities.

"As a county we must focus on achieving savings through sharing services with our villages and towns," he said. "We should look at ways that will make the county operations more efficient."

"As a leader and team member, I have demonstrated my ability to work together with individuals and groups to get the job done," Gouldman said. "My successful track record as a doer has achieved a lot for our town and county."

Anthony Williams

First-time candidate Anthony Williams wants to make a change and keep people constantly informed about Putnam County government and in his community.

"I want to know what the people feel, I want to be a voice for them and I want to be on the legislature and fight for the things that people in Putnam Valley and that comes from Gouldman about what he's doing for the district and what's occurring at the county level.

"He says absolutely nothing about the issues in my area, he gives his report and it would be a one-minute service announcement," Williams said. "To me the legislator can be a part-time job or a full time job, and for too long it's been very much a part-time job."

Williams said he'd like to see sustainable economic development in Putnam Valley and would like the history of Putnam displayed bringing in outside residents for tours to produce economic growth. He wants to pursue more state and federal grants.

"We can look at green energy business that could not only work with the type of natural environment we have, but maintain open spaces and preserve lakes," he said.

Williams also suggested sending polls out to residents to ask them what types of business they would like to see in order to keep them from venturing outside the town or county. He added that smart sustainable development could include implementing a recreation center for people of all ages and that it would pay for itself over time.

Williams added that while legislators flaut the budget, residents are unaware of the $15 million sales tax extension that has helped the board meet their budget each year. He also criticized the board for using taxpayer money to bail out Sheriff Don Smith in his settlement with former district attorney Adam Levy, adding that Gouldman wasn't present for the vote.

Williams said he was against the pay raises for legislators because he doesn't feel they've earned it. (Gouldman voted against the budget that included those pay raises.)

Williams said residents should vote for him because he's a person of action who will get things done.

"I know how to work with people in all walks of life and I've been successful in doing that in the past. I pride myself on being informed and making informed decisions," Williams said. "Communication, transparency, accountability and integrity is key and those are features you haven't gotten with the current administration, but will find in me."
Three Candidates Fight for Two Carmel Council Seats

By David Propper

In the race for Carmel town board, Republican incumbent Suzi McDonough and Republican outsider Michael Barile face off against Democrat and political newcomer Judie Mirra. While Councilman Frank Lombardi is on third party lines, he isn't campaigning. Two seats are up for grabs and the terms run for four years.

Michael Barile

Since the Republican primary in which Michael Barile won easily, he's been preaching that change is needed in the Town of Carmel and he certainly wants to be that change agent on the town board. Barile has been critical of the board's handling of the town including low morale in the police department and town hall, zoning problems along Route 6, and the overall condition of the community.

“Things that go up can go down,” Barile said. “I’m a businessman, I’m not a politician. A politician believes a zero percent tax increase is good; I don’t when you’re up 60 percent the last ten years. You’ve got to show people that it can go down.”

Barile said sewer is necessary to make a main street more viable in Mahopac, but the plan presented to the county, which would get excess sewer from a Somers plant is a “fairy tale.” He would like to see the New York City sewer plant used more. While it’s claimed that the NYC plant is at capacity, Barile doesn’t believe that.

“The day after I’m in I’m going to challenge them,” Barile said. “Why can’t we get a little more out of it?”

Barile said there are people still angry over the town's reassessment and complained the process was not done correctly. He said everyone refused to see the “big picture,” stating the land owned by New York City was not taxed enough.

“The way it was handled, the input was not received from the taxpayers, there were no public hearings, was just an absolute disgrace and a slap in the face,” Barile said.

He wants to see more transparency between the town board and residents and thinks a good portion of the executive sessions held behind closed doors are not necessary. He wants to tell residents more about what's going on in town.

Barile, who will not be taking a salary or health benefits, vowed to be a fighter on the board.

“I was an outsider, I always was an outsider,” Barile said. “Nobody gave me shot in the primary and I hope to do better in the general.”

Judie Mirra

Running for public office for the first time, Judie Mirra knows the Town of Carmel needs a change. She said the all-Republican board has led to one-sided discussions and decision-making behind closed doors.

“I don’t think that’s healthy or beneficial for anybody,” Mirra said, noting many people don’t feel like they’ve been listened to by town officials.

Mirra said an approach has to be made to offset taxes. That means bringing businesses in and finding cost saving measures. Mirra argued efficiency, accountability and transparency must be improved. Residents need to know elected officials will be held accountable when public money is spent, she said.

Mirra said she would look at how other towns handle governmental work and mirror policies and procedures that are successful.

“We don’t have to recreate the wheel,” Mirra, who is on the Salvation Army board, said.

Mirra would like to see recreational opportunities varied for children of different talents and interests. Besides sports, Mirra said she wants other activities that youth can get into like painting, writing, performing arts, and technology. A youth center should be looked at to keep young people away from drug abuse and other harmful activities, Mirra said. She doesn’t think a giant center needs to be built, but perhaps locating a current building that isn’t in use and improving it with the help of local citizens. Community involvement would create a sense of camaraderie, she said.

“When you bring a community in to build something, to do something, to create something they own, it’s very important about what keeps a community close,” Mirra said.

Historic sites in town should be preserved, Mirra said, because residents should be aware of the history that took place in their own town. The town should also try to limit its carbon footprint and must stay on top of infrastructure needs, she added.

The town reassessment should have been handled better, Mirra said.

“We need to be proactive,” Mirra said. “You have to stay on top of things and do your due diligence.”

As for business development, Mirra would like to see a larger diversity of stores that meet customers’ needs. The town's comprehensive plan should be reviewed, she said. Drawing young adults are also important, Mirra said.

Mirra said she would work full-time as a local lawmaker if elected and isn't interested in further political aspiration—only serving Carmel.

“I want for my grandsons future to live in a town that you're not only proud of, but has so many things to offer,” Mirra said.

Suzi McDonough

As the only incumbent vying for a Carmel town board seat in the general election, Suzi McDonough said she’s made it clear to voters that she’s approachable, honest, and a harder worker. She would carry all of these traits into another term if elected.

“Along with the residents I believe the taxes are too high and I have and will continue to find ways to keep them low so our residents can stay in this beautiful community,” McDonough said.

During her two terms on the town board, McDonough listed several accomplishments. The town board has been able to increase the general fund balance and keep the town's bond rating at AA1 that reduces borrowing costs. She noted Carmel has the highest bond rating within the entire county and has stayed under the tax cap in recent years.

She said she’s consistently supported town wide garbage pickup and spearheaded the new town website which enables residents to get text alerts. The town has also established reserves for park improvements and to purchase new town hall equipment, highway vehicles and trucks, and police cars, McDonough said during her tenure.

“Once again this year, we will be under the tax cap,” McDonough said. “I believe with all budgets there is always room for improvement. To keep taxes low, keep our residents safe and protected while giving them something for their taxes is my goal.”

McDonough said there are several initiatives that she would like to continue working on. She said she would continue to advocate for legislation over the way utility companies are taxed. She would also fight against New York City’s “general impediment” to future development and fight for expansion of the wastewater treatment plants. An alternative water supply must be found for Carmel Water District 2 and a better solution for residents within private water districts must be worked on, McDonough said.

McDonough also wants to work on several things including the master plan in coordination with the current codes, infrastructure and traffic, recreation and the drug epidemic.

As a 55-year resident of the town, McDonough vowed to be a community advocate and doesn’t believe she’s a typical politician.

“I am constantly out in the community talking face to face and hearing the concerns of my neighbors,” McDonough said. “When a resident calls or e-mails me I act. I have, and always will have the best interest of my neighbors and will continue to advocate for them and be sure that their voices are heard.”
Fight for Sheriff’s Office Pits Smith Against Langley

By David Propper

Sheriff Don Smith, a Republican, is facing Democrat and former sheriff’s investigator Robert Langley for the top cop job in the county. Former NYPD captain Andrew DeStefano is waging a write-in campaign but isn’t on a party line. The term runs for four years.

Donald Smith

When Donald Smith explains to voters why he should continue as sheriff of Putnam County, he points to the numbers.

Putnam has been the safest county in New York State the last seven years and the last three years it has had the lowest property crime rate, violent and overall crime rate in the entire state.

Smith said crime has been reduced because the sheriff’s office has the right culture to serve residents and put constituents first. He noted the sheriff’s office has outstanding leaders, including five captains that help run the department. Training for sheriff personnel has been enhanced over the years, Smith said, and the sheriff’s office has worked with local town departments cohesively. The school resource officer program has been recognized nationally and the county marine patrol has stepped up in places like Lake Mahopac.

“We have provided vision and leadership that has brought the law enforcement and emergency services at the federal, state, regional and local levels together, sharing resources, information, technology, and personnel to accomplish the unified mission of keeping all of us safe,” Smith, who has served for four terms, said.

In combating the drug epidemic, Smith noted America can’t arrest its way out of the crisis. He said prevention, awareness, education and treatment is the best approach. Deputies are trained to use Narcan, a lifesaving antidote to reverse overdoses, Smith said, and his office works with different organizations to fight the drug scourge.

“Plain and simple our number one priority is to protect all people,” Smith, a former brigadier general, said, noting that must include the most vulnerable in the population.

Opponent Robert Langley has hit Smith hard over the settlement with former district attorney Adam Levy that cost taxpayers $125,000. He has questioned if Smith can go after Levy, are other residents safe. Smith said while he is prevented from discussing the Levy case, he stressed his office has a long history of serving county citizens and “preserving the rights and dignity of everyone.”

Smith said the sheriff’s office is dedicated to the “fair and impartial administration of justice.”

When addressing the approximately $5 million the county has dealt with in settlements stemming from the sheriff’s office between 2006 and 2014, Smith stated it is an undeniable reality that the sheriff’s offices across the state operate in the most heavily litigated area of the law. He noted cases are settled often because lawyers recommend it to avoid unpredictable results and to mitigate risk.

He noted New York City settles cases for $216 million in a single year, which regardless of population differences puts Putnam’s legal settlements in perspective.

“The sheriff’s office settlement experience during my tenure actually compares favorably to the claims experienced in many other jurisdictions,” Smith said.

Smith is a big proponent of gun rights and believes the 2nd Amendment makes residents safer and gun owners deter violence and crime. Strict gun control doesn’t work, Smith said, because a criminal will always find a way to get a weapon.

Smith said while his opponent has law enforcement experience, he has no leadership or supervisory experience in law enforcement.

Smith believes he has helped unify law enforcement and the entire emergency services team in Putnam and has the experience to continue to move the county forward.

“This has not happened by chance or accident,” Smith said. “I have the education, training and experience gained over a lifetime of service to the nation and to the citizens of Putnam County.”

Robert Langley

Returning integrity to the office and fighting the drug epidemic have been hallmarks of candidate Robert Langley’s campaign for county sheriff.

Langley said the most important message he’s communicating with voters is the opioid crisis is not being addressed in Putnam and there is more that can be done to fix it. He stressed drug addicts need treatment, rather than jail time, calling it a disease.

“Addiction isn’t a crime,” Langley said, noting that if those addicts aren’t helped they’ll commit crimes like robbery and property crimes. “These are all drug related.”

He said every justice court in the county needs to have a drug court available to addicts and a program should be in place in the county jail to treat drug addiction. Drug interdiction patrol should be emphasized in the county to choke off the supply entering the community.

Langley said he wants to return integrity to the sheriff’s office and as sheriff he vowed he would be honest about everything. He slammed Smith for his admitted untruths about the former district attorney Adam Levy’s conduct during a rape investigation. Langley stressed a sheriff needs to set the example for the rest of the department personnel.

As a result of the retraction letter Smith sent to Levy, Langley believes the community trust with the sheriff has disappeared and Smith’s leadership has failed because of his focus on politics.

“If Sheriff Smith is willing to fabricate untruths about the former district attorney, what’s to stop him from targeting anyone else,” Langley said, referring to the Alexandru Hossu rape case that ended in an acquittal and a civil lawsuit connected to that case has been filed.

There have been at least $5 million in settlements connected to the sheriff’s office since 2006 to 2014, which Langley called “completely unacceptable” and “alarming.” He has also referred to Smith as a “criminal” because he sent letters to the New York State and federal offices providing seemingly false information about Levy and possibly told untruths during a deposition. Langley said those actions send the wrong message to rank and file officers.

He said community policing will rebuild that trust with more interaction between the sheriff’s department and residents and that increased trust will lead to a safer county. Langley is also a proponent of body cameras because it would protect officers similar to a dash camera on a patrol vehicle.

“The men and women that work there; they’re good people,” Langley said. “They just need proper leadership.”

Concerning gun rights, Langley said he supports the Constitution “100 percent,” including the 2nd Amendment. He said the SAFE Act in New York State is the law of the land and it’s his job to follow it, but he did stress as a law enforcement official, he does have the ability to exercise discretion.

Langley said he’s had several different leadership positions in his life. He was a senior patrol deputy that entailed supervising shifts and making decisions when a sergeant wasn’t present. He has also been a leader in volunteer fire service, including as a lieutenant, captain, and assistant chief in the county.

“I’ve never been reckless in my leadership,” Langley said. “All of this carries over.”

Langley said his past experience in the sheriff’s department helps him deeply understand the top cop job. He said he’s worked all the divisions in the sheriff’s department and knows what’s required of the department and the men and women that work there.

“I am uniquely qualified for the position, I’m the right choice, I have the law enforcement experience, I have leadership, and I have integrity,” Langley said.
Crowded Field Seeks Two Kent Town Board Seats

By David Propper

Two Republican councilpersons, Paul Denbaum and Bill Huestis, are running for another term on the Kent town board against Democratic challengers Stephen Papas and Jason Makely. The term for a council seat runs for four years.

Paul Denbaum

When Paul Denbaum ran four years ago, he had a list of priorities to improve the Town of Kent. Running for a second term, he believes he’s fulfilled those pledges.

In his first term, the town has offered four straight no tax increase budgets that he’s supported, implemented term limits, and put forth more transparency.

“I’m not the one who organized a walk off the board. Democratic opponent and wants to see actions. Denbaum said the former ZBA he defended his criticism of the ZBA’s liked to see things work out differently, to green light the concrete business. Denbaum said to draw businesses, he passed legislation that lessens the tax burden for a certain number of years for new businesses. Denbaum said he thinks if one business comes in, it’ll create a snowball effect. He wants to reexamine zoning and planning laws that encourages development and relaxes some requirements.

Denbaum pledged regardless of whether it is popular or not, he’ll continue to do what’s right for the town. “I will tell you why I think that way, I will engage with residents,” Denbaum said. “I promise that I will do my best to vote for what’s right and explain my position and never back down.”

Bill Huestis

As Bill Huestis runs for another term, he wants to continue to keep the community in mind and focus on quality of life issues. During his tenure, he’s worked on a variety of issues and wants to continue to tackle large-scale problems in Kent.

Huestis said one concern is traffic safety and he has been in contact with New York State about improving state road intersections in town. He’s concerned with zombie homes or “homes in distress” that pull the property value down for other homes in the area.

Huestis would also like to see improvements to the “untraditional main street” of Route 52 and Route 311. He and the town board have been pursuing grants and want to see upgrades in the area considering there are so many empty buildings and storefronts on the main roads. Huestis would also like to explore getting sidewalks in town to make it more walker friendly.

Huestis said he’s pushed for town lakes to be prioritized in a state program that would lead to environmental issues handled.

“We really need a ‘Kent first’ initiative to seek outside funding and be a model,” Huestis said. “We need to show we can progress. You got to buy into the town, you got to spend the time, and you got to listen to people.”

During his first term, Huestis said he was the first person to advocate that Little Fill’s Causeway on Nichols Street become safer with new guardrails and a paved road. A state grant paid for it, he noted.

Huestis supported legislation that would lower property taxes for new businesses. Huestis said he’d work to bring in more commercial development, stressing he wants the right type of businesses that meet the needs of the community and the town’s Master Plan.

Regarding the concrete plant controversy, he said the plant concerned him because it hurts residents’ quality of life. He’s interested in a public hearing over legislation that would limit concrete mixing plants to a small part of town.

“I’m going to keep an open mind on this and there might be other options,” he said.

Huestis, a former director for the senior resources office at the county, said he’s been intertwined in the community for more than 60 years. He noted his hard work can be seen throughout the town as a volunteer before he was elected to office.

“Let’s be one community,” Huestis said. “Together we can address and improve the quality of life of our town and that’s the main thing here. We need to step up.”

Stephen Papas

When going door-to-door, Stephen Papas said he hears that residents want the Town of Kent to have an identity.

“Whether it’s having a downtown, whether it’s having a more robust recreation department, the Town of Kent feels disjointed,” Papas said. “And in order for us to feel that it’s not disjointed is we need to have community outreach to the different areas that I would love to lead.”

Papas would like to bring more grants into Kent. His day job entails writing grants for the non-profit Meals on Wheels so he would like to bring those skills to different projects taking place in Kent. Partaking in the town’s lakes committee, he’s already written and submitted grants to try to get money for different lakes in town. He would like to pursue grants for the Route 52.

“Unfortunately it’s not the most desirable location for commercial development,” Papas said. “And I want to change that.”

Papas said to improve Route 52, he thinks a mix-use development would serve that main road in Kent well. Papas would like to use the town’s great hiking trails and lakes to draw visitors and hopes to find businesses that can offer day hikers a place to go.

When discussing the current town board, Papas gave much of the credit to fellow Democrat Maureen Fleming for keeping budget line flat the last four years. When asked about the proposal by Councilman Paul Denbaum to outlaw concrete-mixing plants in most of the town, Papas said while he doesn’t want a concrete mixing business in town, he thinks a better approach is to look at the entire town and undergo a comprehensive plan rather than just “spot-zone.”

Stephen Papas

Papas said he didn’t like how the Republican majority on the board undermined the Zoning Board of Appeals, which eventually all resigned in the aftermath of its Kent concrete plant decision that gave the controversial business the green light. Even if the concrete plant isn’t wanted in town, Papas said the ZBA had to follow the law.

Papas said he has experience at the federal, state, and local level. He has lived in Kent for less than a year, but believes he’s familiar with the inner workings of the town. His fiancé and her family have lived in town for many years. He wants to make this a community where he raises his children one day.

“I hope they vote for me because I want to protect our lakes, develop a downtown, because I want to bring back an identity where people identify as a resident of Kent,” Papas said. “and not a disjointed hamlet like Lake Carmel or Kent Lakes but they see themselves as a Kent resident and have that pride.”

Jason Makely

Jason Makely said instead of continuing to commiserate on social media platforms about the current state of government and politics across the nation, he wanted to take a small step to

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Fleming, Madigan Vie for Kent Supervisor Post

By David Propper

Kent Supervisor Maureen Fleming, a Democrat, looks to serve another two years as she goes up against former Kent councilwoman Patricia Madigan, a Republican. The term runs for two years.

Maureen Fleming

During her nearly four years as town supervisor in Kent, Maureen Fleming believes she can point to a record that warrants another term in office.

Fleming, calling herself a fiscal conservative, stressed she hasn't raised taxes in four years and given residents a sense of relief by keeping spending level. She said she helped bring professionalism back to town hall and there have been improvements made to equipment inventory.

Fleming noted there is more transparency in town hall and residents have a stronger dialogue with town officials. A public hearing is held during the span of at least two meetings, rather than just once to gather as much input as possible.

Regarding the budget, Fleming said some fat has been cut from the expenditure plan. Alternative health insurance will also be offered in the near future that could cut down on costs for the town and employees.

To improve business development, Fleming said she's working with the county's Economic Development Corporation and real estate agents in the area. She said there is hope to attract a large business that could lead to two hotels, an indoor waterpark, and places to eat that could result in 200 jobs.

"Kent wants to be open for business," Fleming said. "I really feel that we're on the verge of a very big step for Kent."

When addressing the controversial concrete plant, Fleming couldn't speak much about it because the homeowners association she's part of filed an Article 78 against the Zoning Board of Appeals for determining the plant could operate along Route 52. She stands by asking the ZBA to reopen a hearing about the concrete plant, which ZBA members took offense to and then resigned shortly after that request.

Fleming also highlighted union deals have been struck with little infighting and said she works well with the highway department to ensure roads and other town assets are taken care of. She's happy to see a lakes association in town was created, considering the lakes have had to dangerous blue-green algae in them.

Fleming wants to continue to cultivate a "small town atmosphere" with community gatherings at the town center like the winter fest or pumpkin glow.

"We need to engender more of a sense of community and give back to the people who work so hard to live here," Fleming said.

Fleming believes she's been responsive and available to residents. Regardless of political party, Fleming said she's able to work well with other local, county, and state officials.

"I think if people vote for me, I think we're going to keep moving forward," Fleming said. "I don't want to go backward. We're putting Kent back on the map."

Patricia Madigan

Patricia Madigan is running for Town of Kent supervisor because she believes the town deserves more and isn't reaching its full potential with the current supervisor.

"We're not moving forward the way we should be," Madigan, a former councilwoman, said. "Things have not changed."

Madigan pointed to the lack of new businesses in area and argued if more economic development doesn't come into town, it'll make property taxes higher. She said being so close to the county seat in Carmel, if the town is able to structure itself properly, it can draw professional office jobs into the community. She'd like to work with the Putnam Industrial Development Agency and Economic Development Corporation to find a way to get those jobs into the town.

Madigan said she would like to see the Route 52 corridor become more of a main street and would pursue grants to further that cause.

When asked about the job Supervisor Maureen Fleming has done, Madigan said she's been disappointed. Madigan, along with other Republicans, supported Fleming when she ran against old supervisor Kathy Doherty four years ago, but Madigan said there has been a "lack of achievements."

Madigan said there's been little ability to work with other boards and volunteer committees and town employees. When asked about the entire Zoning Board of Appeals resigning, Madigan called it unfortunate and said it should have never reached the point where every member stepped down. She argued better leadership might have prevented it and suggested a meeting between the town board and ZBA could have been brokered to come to an understanding.

When addressing the concrete plant along Route 52 disliked by many nearby residents, Madigan vowed to support legislation brought forward by Councilman Paul Denbaum that would outlaw those businesses in the town except in one district in town.

Madigan said she would bring better communication skills to town hall and there would be more cohesionness within the town board and with volunteers.

Madigan vowed to make the supervisor job her only duty and would retire from her job with Cornell Cooperative Extension before she took office if she won. She would make herself available to residents, businesses and other people within the county.

"I can bring more to town government than has been brought these past three and a half years," Madigan said. "Somebody's got to step forward."

Crowded Field Seeks Two Kent Town Board Seats

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improve government at the local level.

"If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem," he said. "If can do something to benefit my little corner of the world, I would be remiss if I didn’t use my skills, talents and abilities to bear in that regard."

Makely, who is a talent agent for a top ten firm in the field, said his professional job is to advocate and represent people, which is similar to being an elected official.

Makely said he wants to ensure the town’s lakes are taken care and would stay on top of their environmental health. As someone who fishes for a hobby, he wants to explore ways to eradicate the blue-green algae blooms in the local bodies of water that shut down town beaches many times over the summer.

"I feel like there’s got to be a fix there," Makely said. "It’s something I feel very strongly about."

Makely said he wants to continue to increase the sense of community in the area by holding events hosted by the library and recreation staff. He suggests putting a more advanced website out or interactive platform that residents can access and find out about different happenings in town.

Addressing the controversial concrete plant, Makely said he’s heard pros and cons about the business. Living along Route 52, he acknowledged a possible increase in traffic and that some lakes could be affected.

Concerning the friction between the town board and other volunteer boards, Makely said better communication is necessary. Getting everyone in the room to hash out differences could solve problems, he said.

He gave credit to fellow Democrat and Supervisor Maureen Fleming for the job she's done. He said he wants to bring a fresh perspective to the board and wouldn't have an allegiance to anyone, but the town's residents.

"I’m not a politician," Makely said. "I really want to get to the heart of any issue and find the best solution that’ll benefit the town and that’s how I’m going to approach everything, with the town’s best interest at heart."
Race for Southeast Town Board Seats Heat Up

By Anna Young

Republican town board members Robert Cullen and Elizabeth Hudak look to defend their Southeast town board seats against Democratic challengers John Lord and Melinda Montanaro. Each term runs for four years.

Elizabeth Hudak

Two-term incumbent Elizabeth Hudak is running for another term on the Town Board to implement more recreational programs, continue smart fiscal growth and oversee revenue development projects throughout the town.

“I believe my experience as an Attorney at Law practicing in the Family Law and Real Estate fields, and my residing in Southeast for 32 years, has enhanced my role as Councilwoman and benefited the community,” Hudak said. “I have brought a strong presence as a facilitator and advocate to the board, a role which I believe has benefited Southeast.”

During her tenure, Hudak said she has been effective in growing the fund balance, consistently keeping the budget under the tax cap, and stabilizing a previously fractured board, which she said existed during her first term.

“I have also been proactive in shepherding several responsible projects through the Town Board process and am currently on the panel investigating the possibility of partnering with Danbury Tuesday morning on economical sewage disposal through the Town of Southeast,” Hudak said. “I believe that my advocacy on the board has resulted in sensible development and smart budgeting which has been beneficial to the town’s economic well-being.”

With the budget currently in jeopardy of breaking the tax cap, Hudak said she is thoroughly examining the budget to prevent that from happening, stating how the board has been challenged with providing great services to residents while also maintain finances in light of growing state mandates.

“I am proud to say that I have been very vocal in preventing the Board from exceeding the state mandated tax cap,” Hudak said. “I believe my advocacy in this regard will yield positive results.”

Moving forward, Hudak said initiatives booming throughout the town, Hudak said her presence on the board has generated responsible development. She added that Crossroads 312 project would fill a town need bringing in hotel and retail establishments, attesting that it’ll increase tourism and revenue. Additionally, she said the Barrett Hill project would provide the county with affordable housing for first responders, educators, veterans and seniors.

If reelected, Hudak said she will continue to encourage smart development and fiscal responsibility; investigate new alternatives for recreational programs; explore opportunities for growing the environmental areas within the town; and maintain cooperation with the Village of Brewster and county representatives to maximize the town’s ability to combine services when possible.

“There will be no learning curve for me,” Hudak said. “I believe experienced leadership is what Southeast needs in what may prove to be a very interesting next few years.”

Robert Cullen

Two-term incumbent Robert Cullen wants the opportunity to serve Southeast for another term in order to continue to move the town in the right direction.

“I am running for reelection because I enjoy being on the town board,” Cullen said. “I believe I have helped move Southeast in a positive direction, while keeping town taxes low, the lowest town tax rate of any town in Putnam County.”

During his time serving on the town board, Cullen said he has helped residents of the Springhouse estates get new wells, providing them with clean water. He added that the board is also in the process of getting a new water source for residents of the Peaceable Hill water district.

“A solar field is being built at the old capped Southeast landfill, which will produce solar electric power to offset the electric bills of town facilities. This should greatly reduce the town’s power costs,” the retired Police sergeant and security officer at Indian Point said. “I am most proud of the solar project. Hopefully it will be on line by end of 2017. This green initiative will benefit the town for a long time.”

Moving forward, Cullen said one of the most important issue facing the town is the budget and unfunded mandates.

“While the town is trying its best to keep our budget under the tax cap, some expenses such as health insurance for employees are out of the town’s control,” Cullen said. “I believe the board can pass a budget within the cap, with minimal cuts. I am looking at every town line, and trying to identify cost savings.”

With the town pursuing different development opportunities, Cullen believes commercial growth with benefit residential taxpayers without the burdening the school district with additional students. He added that has given every project a hard look prior to approving it.

“My tenure of seven and a half years, and previous experience as a police officer gives me a deep understanding of government,” Cullen said. “I believe I have the experience necessary to continue to move Southeast and Brewster in the right direction, keeping a high quality of life for families to raise their families while maintaining low taxes.”

John Lord

Despite losing a town board election two years ago, resident John Lord is running again for a seat on the Southeast Town Board.

“I started attending Town Board meetings over 10 years ago, spoke up at meetings, wrote letters, petitioned on different projects, and ran for office two years ago,” the lifelong Brewster resident said. “I believe that I can make a positive contribution to the town as a member of the Town Council.”

Lord, an international moving manager, said he became an avid audience member during town, zoning and planning board meetings due to changes being made to Southeast, stating that he doesn’t believe council members have made an effort to listen to their constituents.

“The Democratic candidate added how a zoning change to the Crossroads 312 site, which was voted on by three council members (including Robert Cullen and Liz Hudak), was a decision that benefited the applicant more than residents and the town.

“I have not been in favor of some zoning changes that the town board has enacted for recent projects,” Lord said. “These zoning changes have serious implications as they also apply to other zones with the same designation.”

If elected, Lord said he wants officials to acknowledge the Comprehensive Plan, stating that it’s a road map to preserving the town’s character, making it attractive and providing sustainable growth and jobs.

Lord added that he would also like to see the Town of Southeast and the Village of Brewster collaborate on more issues.

“I believe that there are many opportunities for us to work together to save tax dollars and to make recreation, cultural, and outdoor programs available to residents,” Lord said.

With the town expected to break the tax cap this year, Lord believes that while Supervisor Tony Hay’s leadership has been vital to maintaining the budget, he would not break the tax cap. Lord added how the board needs to be more transparent with residents on issues like the higher garbage costs this year.

As an avid volunteer within the community and a consistent audience member during meetings, Lord said that he understands how change and development happen and would be an asset to the town council.

“I intend to listen to the residents, work hard, watch our tax dollars and implement positive change,” Lord said. “I will listen to residents, work hard and act on their concerns. Innovative ideas, hard work and respect will strengthen Southeast.”

Melinda Montanaro

After spending almost a decade volunteering within the community, first-time candidate Melinda Montanaro is excited for the opportunity to help the community thrive.

“My family and I fell in love with Southeast; that is why we moved here,” the Democratic candidate said. “Running for office taught me that we all want a stronger, more successful Southeast.”

While she believes that board members are enthusiastic about their role in the town, she believes there’s a lot more work that could be done to better the community, stating that there are many opportunities in development and recreation.

If elected, Montanaro said she would like to achieve smarter and more beneficial development that could contribute to the tax base and add jobs without putting the burden on residents. She would also like to boost recreation, parks and open spaces.

“These are areas that can lead to not only a better quality of life, but revenues as well,” she said.

With the budget at risk of exceeding the tax cap, Montanaro, a former marketing executive, doesn’t believe the tax cap shouldn’t be broken.

“I understand budgeting and despite taking the lowest bid, the 2017 garbage
By David Propper

Two Democratic incumbents, John Van Tassel and Michael Leonard, are running for reelection to the Philipstown town board. They face Republican challenger Tim Greco. The councilperson terms run for four years.

John Van Tassel

On the town board for eight years, John Van Tassel knows experience matters.

During his tenure, he said he's worked with the rest of the board to protect the environment and its residents and is always open to input from the public.

"It's a very unique place with a lot of unique people and we try to include everybody as much as possible," he said.

Fiscally, Van Tassel said the town board has kept the budget under the tax cap every year since he's been a councilman and in his first year, he was part of a town board that lowered the budget.

While taxes have stayed at bay, Van Tassel said improvements have been made at the recreation department and the town's emergency preparedness is more robust. For instance, the recreation center is now a Red Cross shelter with a generator in case of a disaster, he said.

Going forward, there are several infrastructure issues that the town needs to have a watchful eye over, he said. With town hall in "disrepair," Van Tassel said there is a plan to replace the windows, put in an elevator, and make it code complaint and energy efficient. The highway garage also needs to be upgraded because highway workers are working out of a trailer right now.

Discussing the safe gun storage ordinance that's been debated, but never voted on, Van Tassel said he supports the safest storage of firearms. As a gun owner himself, Van Tassel said he changed the way he stored his gun after meeting with town residents about the issue and would like to discuss it again within the year. He stressed some of the wording in the proposed resolution might need to be reworked and understood gun owners are concerned about access to firearms for self-defense.

Van Tassel said he was against the sanctuary immigration vote because the town board doesn't set protocol for any law enforcement agency and doesn't ask for or retain anyone's immigration status.

"To me we really don't have a horse in the race," he said.

Van Tassel has been an active firefighter in the North Highlands Department and has coached baseball and football. Van Tassel stressed his wealth of experience on the town board and Michael Leonard's experience are why voters should choose them.

"For somebody to step in cold would be really hard," Van Tassel said. "I have a platform to speak from and I use that when I need to get my point across."

Michael Leonard

Completing his first term this year, Michael Leonard has kept busy during his four years as a Philipstown councilman.

Working in the utilities management industry for more than 20 years, Leonard said taking on challenges and getting results are important to him. Before he became a town board member, he was on the planning board, the conservation board, and was a board of tax assessment member. All that background gave him a terrific foundation to serve the town, he said.

Van Tassel said his largest undertaking so far has been tackling environmental issues like storm water management by revamping that entire program in the town. He said he's addressed illegal dumping, septic failure into lakes and worked on the climate smart pledge to make the town greener. A coordinator has been hired to focus on lessening the carbon footprint in town, he said.

Leonard has also been active with the local historic cemeteries and has been part of an effort to restore many gravestones the last couple of years. The county recognized Philipstown for the work the town has done toward that effort, he said.

Upgrading town hall has been helpful to residents, Leonard said, because it'll be more accessible while still keeping its historic side. Files will be easier to get and more meeting rooms will be available, he said.

Roadways have also been resurfaced, he said, and bridges have been repaired.

"We're pretty involved," he said. "We've got a lot going on."

Going forward, Leonard notes the town board might pursue a town-wide tax revaluation.

His opponent, Tim Greco, has criticized him for voting for a resolution addressing illegal immigration. Leonard said he voted in favor of the equal protection resolution to send a message to the federal government to take on immigration reform. He noted the resolution stated no local, state or federal immigration laws would be violated, but town employees should not be involved with immigrant enforcement unless compelled by the law.

As for the safe gun storage ordinance, Leonard called it a complex issue because of different requirements for different guns. He likes the idea of a weapon being stored safely, but noted further education might be the best option and should be discussed by both sides of the debate to reach a solution.

He noted residents of the town requested that the town board weigh in on the two contentious items.

Leonard said unlike his Republican opponent, he has been involved in many town activities. Leonard said when a person calls him; he returns their call within one or two days.

"I have a lot of experience," he said.

Tim Greco

Calling himself a moderate Republican, Tim Greco wants to bring diversity of thought to the Philipstown town board.

Greco, a pastor at the Church on the Hill, which is right across the street from town hall, said he wants to bring a new vision and further inclusion to the town board. He said there is feeling among some residents that town board members go through the motions too often rather than stay focused on the budget, infrastructure needs and other critical local issues.

He argued the town board puts too much attention on divisive issues outside of its jurisdiction like the safe gun storage proposal that's been discussed and a resolution focused on illegal immigration.

Greco claims that because the town board voted 3-2 to pass a sanctuary-type bill regarding illegal immigration, it could lead to the federal government withholding funds from the town. He believes immigration policies rest with the federal government, rather than a local board.

Greco, who is a gun owner, called a possible safe gun storage ordinance too intrusive and not enforceable.

Instead, he wants to see issues addressed like congestion around the hiking trails, particularly near Breakneck Ridge and said the town needs to fight more against the opioid crisis by educating residents about drug addiction and what leads to it.

"We need to stick to what really matters in our community," Greco, who works as a media specialist for the Walter Hoving Home (a drug recovery center) in Garrison, said.

When responding to some critics' claims that when he worked for the local Putnam County News and Recorder, he was a divisive figure, Greco scoffed at the suggestion. He said he held a mirror up to the community, rather than report inaccurately as critics have asserted.

"They didn't like what they were hearing," he said. "They were the problem, I wasn't."

Greco said his leadership qualities and volunteer record in the community are proven. He said he helped turn a church that only had four people in its congregation into a thriving house of worship within a year.

Greco said voters should select him because of his integrity and love for the town.

"I would bring a new voice to our community," Greco said. "I would share information."
How Does a Constitutional Convention Work?

If the Nov. 7 proposition passes, there will be elections in each of the state’s 63 senatorial districts next November to determine the three delegates who will represent each district.

Any citizen can run to become a delegate from their district as long as they gather 1,000 signatures from members of their party if they are a Republican or Democrat. Independents would need 3,000 signatures or signatures equaling at least 5 percent of the voters in the last gubernatorial election in their district.

Another 15 at-large statewide delegates would bring the total to 204.

A convention would convene on Apr. 2, 2019, and likely last up to six months, although there really isn’t a time limit. However, a convention would have to be completed in time to get whatever questions are on the ballot for the 2019 general election.

Delegates would be paid at the same rate as a state legislator – a $79,500 salary – for the duration of the convention, he said.

Cost estimates from anti-convention groups are pegged the expense at as much as $300 million while pro-convention advocates argue it wouldn’t exceed $100 million.

Martin Wilbur

Excitement, Fear Grows for Chance at Constitutional Convention

By Martin Wilbur

It’s taken nearly all year for citizens to take notice, but with time dwindling until Election Day an increasing number of voters have realized that a critically important proposition which comes up just once every 20 years is on the ballot.

On Nov. 7, New York State residents will decide whether they want to schedule a Constitutional Convention to potentially make sweeping changes to the state constitution.

Depending on who you speak with, opinions range from ridding Albany of much of its corruption and dysfunction to irreparably damaging life in New York if a convention is convened.

Morgan Pehme, communications director for NY People’s Convention, a Manhattan-based group advocating for a convention, said there is good reason why disparate groups that hardly agree on anything – Planned Parenthood and Right-to-Lifers, the Working Families Party and the NRA – are advocating for a No vote.

The major political parties and special interests and their allies wield disproportionate influence in Albany and dictate what key public policies and issues are raised, he said.

“What is the common thread? They are the groups that have the power in Albany and they are very content keeping things the way they are,” Pehme said. “But in our view, New York is one of the most corrupt and dysfunctional state governments, and the status quo is hurting New Yorkers. We have tried through the regular legislative channels (to have) such a resistance and to make a difference and Albany has simply thumbed its nose.”

Many others, though, are actively working to defeat the proposition. Bruce Campbell, a board member with the Lower Hudson Valley Progressive Action Network (LHVPAN), the Westchester-Putnam chapter of the state group, said too many hard-fought gains could be lost in a single convention. That could include dismantling the pension system, sabotaging environmental protections to ensure clean drinking water and many others.

“If you have a convention it opens it up to changing everything, including things that are in the constitution that protect a lot of working families that would be under attack at a convention,” he said. “I think a lot of the people who want changes in the constitution want a kind of a panacea, they see it as an easy thing.”

Campbell said while much good came out of the 1894 and 1938 conventions, it was a different world that didn’t have so-called “dark money” trying to heavily influence elections.

Stripping away pensions is one of the scare tactics the opposition has used, Pehme argued. He said people already in a pension system are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, although it is theoretically possible for future workers to miss out on that benefit.

“The state is up to Tier VI in the pension system, which is far less robust than the original state pensions, Pehme said.

Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti (D-Pleasantville), who is against a convention, said special interests with deep pockets would likely tilt the delegate balance by being able to put up their candidates and push them through.

He said extremists could take over and could make revisions.

“The dreams of reform are likely to be shattered by the nightmare of the election results,” said Abinanti, who will be speaking about the proposition at the Mount Pleasant Democratic Committee meeting on Nov. 2 at Tesoro d’Italia restaurant in Pleasantville. “In simple terms, because who gets elected as delegates will determine what the convention will do, and in big money times, it’s going to be big money delegates.”

He advocates individual constitutional amendments passed by the legislature and proposed by voters. There have been more than 200 of those passed in the past 100 years, and another, Assemblyman David Buchwald’s pension forfeiture bill, is up for a vote this year.

But Alan Rothstein, the interim executive director of the good government group Citizens Union, said those against the convention are the ones pouring in the money. In fact, Pehme estimates that the No campaign could outraise the Yes side by as much as 10-to-1.

Rothstein said while there have been many propositions over the years, no major changes such as campaign finance reform, early voting or overhauling the state’s court system ever gets accomplished legislatively.

“For major structural reforms, this hasn’t happened,” Rothstein said of individual amendments passed by the legislature to put up to the voters. “They amend the constitution frequently, but not in a major way, not in regard with how the government works.”

Race for Southeast Town Board Seats Heat Up

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contract increased dramatically and will have to be paid for,” she said. “I believe an equally important aspect of budgeting is doing proactive work to build up our town’s other revenue streams so we don’t have to rely so much on taxes.”

With the town exploring different development opportunities, Montanaro does not believe the application for Morrow Equipment to mount a 98-foot crane on Route 312 is beneficial for residents. She added with the contractor relocating with their own employees, the project would not create job opportunities, ultimately reduce property values and cause devastation to the hundreds of homes in the surrounding areas.

While Montanaro is new to the political scene, she believes she would be an asset to the board, stating she will communicate with residents to set goals and work together to make better strides in the community.

“I am a doer; I always have been. And I believe hard work is often lacking in government,” Montanaro said. “I’m always looking for that next project that helps someone in some way and I give it my unwavering attention and dedication.”
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