

1 **GREENBURGH CAMPAIGN FINANCE COMMISSION**
2 **MEETING MINUTES -- MARCH 2, 2000**
3 **(approved March 17,2000)**
4

5 Present:

6 Elizabeth Daniel, Catherine Lederer-Plaskett, Claire Lee, Harriet Leib, Susan Mancuso, Sally Schaadt,
7 Charlotte Schienberg, Francis Sheehan, Lester Steinman, Mary Tobias
8

9 Civic association representatives:

10 Mark Baron (The Cotswold Association, Inc.)
11 Stephanie W. Bellino (Lower Manor Woods Neighborhood Association)
12 Lorin Brown (North Elmsford Civic Association)
13 Danny Gold (East Irvington Civic Association; Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations, Chair)
14 Del and Dinah Hillgartner (Beaver Hill Civic Association)
15 Ella Preiser (Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations, Secretary)
16 Robert Reninger (Broadview Civic Association)
17 Carol A. Wielk (Secor Homes Civic Association, Inc.)
18 Irene Zuck (Fulton Park Civic Association)
19

20 Press:

21 David Gottlieb (The Scarsdale Inquirer)
22

23 Absent:

24 Andrew Goodman, Erin Malloy, Rev. Wilbert Preston, Mike Reynolds, Ervin Schliefer
25
26

27 The third meeting of the commission was called to order at 7:37pm in room 121, at Rochambeau
28 School, 228 Fisher Avenue, White Plains. An agenda and various handouts were distributed.
29

30 Co-chair Harriet Leib welcomed the attendees and introduced the commissioners present for the first
31 time-- County League of Women Voters (LWV) representative Charlotte Schienberg and Republican
32 Party representative Sally Schaadt. Ms. Leib welcomed all of the civic association representatives
33 present and said community participation is crucial so the commission can obtain the input needed to
34 develop a proposal that is right for the Town of Greenburgh. She said three names are listed as
35 speakers on the agenda. She asked Mary Tobias to introduce each civic association representative and
36 decide who would speak to the commission.
37

38 Mary Tobias introduced each of the civic association representatives present, by name and civic
39 association affiliation, and said anyone who wanted to speak would be given the opportunity.
40

41 Harriet Leib introduced David Gottlieb from the *The Scarsdale Inquirer* and then asked Mary Tobias
42 to select the first speaker.
43

44 Mary Tobias asked Danny Gold to address the commission.
45

46 Danny Gold thanked the commission for inviting him. He said the commission could play an
47 important role in helping improve the Town of Greenburgh. The Council of Greenburgh Civic
48 Associations has not formed an opinion related to the commission. Two issues are of particular
49 personal concern to him. The first major concern is that developers doing work in the town make
50 campaign contributions to the incumbents. Near his home, for example, a proposal to build 800 units
51 of housing is moving through the approval process. The developers and their consultants contribute to
52 Supervisor Feiner's campaigns, making the motives for those contributions suspicious. The developers

53 are making contributions that can't be matched by the residents. Even if there is no impropriety, the
54 perception of impropriety is there. Developers and those doing business with the town, such as
55 suppliers, should not be allowed to contribute to candidates, and the candidates shouldn't be able to
56 hide contributions by receiving them from a developer's son-in-law, etc. Currently, most of the
57 contributions are untraceable. The second major concern is the misuse of cable access television. The
58 CGCA is non-partisan, despite what the incumbents say in an attempt to discredit the Council's efforts.
59 The CGCA has a cable access show that has a significant number of viewers, based on the number of
60 residents who have commented about the show. The residents seems to be watching what is on the
61 cable access stations. During the last election, Town of Greenburgh incumbents manipulated
62 scheduling to favor their campaigns. Fairness is needed for all candidates. The CGCA sponsored a
63 debate for the last primary election. Mr. Gold was the moderator and took extreme care to be fair to
64 every candidate. The town unfairly scheduled the debate to be played on a holiday, Labor Day, and by
65 the time the date/time was fixed it was too late to do advance publicity. There was no publicity. It was
66 not fair to the candidates. The current cable access policy in Greenburgh is that incumbents, who are
67 also candidates, decide who may appear on cable and when the shows will air. Decisions regarding
68 cable access television should not be partisan. Mr. Gold concluded by thanking the commission for
69 allowing him the opportunity to speak.

70

71 Mary Tobias introduced Ella Preiser.

72

73 Ella Preiser said that she seconds all the comments made by Mr. Gold. The CGCA-sponsored debate
74 strictly adhered to all LWV debate guidelines to ensure fairness to all candidates. The debate was
75 organized because the press does not adequately inform the public about candidates running for local
76 office. Only the *The Scarsdale Inquirer* provided coverage. Mrs. Preiser objected to the commission's
77 meeting announcement in today's (3/2/00) *The Journal News*, which she read. "CAMPAIGN
78 FINANCE: The newly formed Greenburgh Finance Commission, set up by Town Supervisor Paul
79 Feiner to deal with issues of campaign finance, will meet at 7:30p.m. today at the Rochambeau School,
80 228 Fisher Ave., White Plains. Call Harriet Leib at xxx-xxxx." (The phone number was deleted from
81 the minutes by the Secretary.) Mrs. Preiser said the announcement supports a concern that Supervisor
82 Feiner created the commission solely as a means of getting additional personal publicity.

83

84 Harriet Leib said that she was responsible for the press release but what was read is not what she
85 submitted. She said addressing the press is a major problem.

86

87 Ella Preiser said that the announcement mentions Harriet Leib but doesn't even mention the LWV, just
88 Supervisor Feiner. There is a serious concern that the commission is being controlled and used by the
89 Supervisor. Even the fairness of how the commission members were selected is questionable.
90 Regarding cable, the incumbents didn't follow their own rules. They adopted cable access restrictions
91 on candidates and then ignored the rules when they impacted them. For example, immediately after
92 the LWV-sponsored debate the incumbents played a special promotional video about town-provided
93 services that contained a segment about the incumbents, including those seeking re-election. The
94 incumbents even played the promotional video twice on the eve of the election, in specific violation of
95 the rules they adopted and enforced against opponents. Even worse, they promised to replay the
96 CGCA-sponsored debate on a certain date, and the community publicized the date/time. It was even
97 advertised on the "Grassroots for Greenburgh" website, a website maintained by a citizen advocacy
98 group, and e-mailed to interested community members. After the community made considerable effort
99 to publicize the event, the town didn't air the debate on the date promised. Regarding campaign
100 donations, the Supervisor's campaign filings are a "who's who" of those doing business in the Town of
101 Greenburgh.

102

103 Co-chair Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said she has the actual meeting announcement press release in her
104 hand and asked Mrs. Preiser for the newspaper clipping that she read.
105

106 Ella Preiser forwarded the clipping and continued. She said she attended the 2/3/00 meeting sponsored
107 by Assemblywoman Sandra Galef. Ms. Elizabeth Daniel was one of the speakers. Mrs. Preiser said a
108 campaign finance board works in New York City but the budget of the Town of Greenburgh is much
109 smaller than the New York City budget and independent auditors and attorneys are expensive. How a
110 board in Greenburgh would be financed is a major concern. How members of the board would be
111 selected is also a concern, as is the selection process of members on this commission. Mrs. Preiser
112 asked how the commission was formed.
113

114 Harriet Leib said that Supervisor Paul Feiner contacted the LWV. He wanted a campaign finance
115 reform referendum on the November ballot. The LWV said they would create a commission provided
116 it was independent. The composition is similar to that of the Singer Commission. It includes LWV
117 members in Greenburgh. Political parties in Greenburgh were asked to send representatives.
118 Consultants, such as Lester Steinman, were asked to participate. The LWV tried to make the
119 commission as diverse as possible.
120

121 Carol Wielk asked how many members are on the commission.
122

123 Harriet Leib said the commission has 15 members.
124

125 Carol Wielk asked if all 15 were picked by the LWV.
126

127 Harriet Leib said yes, with suggestions from Supervisor Feiner. They tried to be inclusive.
128

129 Harriet Leib read in its entirety the 2/25/2000 "Across Our Towns" press release she actually sent to
130 the *The Journal News*: "1. The Greenburgh Campaign Finance Commission will meet on Thursday,
131 March 2, 2000 at 7:30 p.m. at the Rochambeau School, 228 Fisher Avenue, White Plains, Room 121.
132 2. The Greenburgh Campaign Finance Commission will meet on Friday, March 17, 2000 at 8:30 a.m.
133 at the Rochambeau School, 228 Fisher Avenue, White Plains, Room 121. Contact persons Harriet
134 Leib (xxx-xxxx), Catherine Lederer-Plaskett (xxx-xxxx) Note: I understand this is late, but please try
135 to include the information." (The phone numbers were deleted from the minutes by the Secretary.)
136 Ms. Leib said that someone from the paper called her and asked how the commission was created and
137 who created it. The announcement was changed from what was in the submitted press release.
138

139 Ella Preiser said the commission should see to it that this type of press announcement never gets
140 published again.
141

142 Sally Schaadt said the *The Journal News* has someone who deals with ethical reporting. They claim to
143 hold themselves to high standards of reporting. The person should be informed that the commission's
144 press release was changed without authorization.
145

146 Lester Steinman said the editor should be contacted. Why deal with someone at a lower level. We
147 don't want this to happen again.
148

149 David Gottlieb suggested the commission speak to the reporter who served as the contact. He said that
150 should be sufficient remedy.
151

152 Lester Steinman said that the commission should not get bogged down on this issue. The commission
153 has much to do. Cable has already been repeatedly mentioned. The commission needs to obtain and
154 examine the rules governing cable.
155

156 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the problem is not the rules, the problem is the rules are not followed.
157

158 Lester Steinman said a copy of the rules is needed before the commission can make a determination
159 regarding compliance.
160

161 Carol Weilk had a copy of the cable access rules as listed on the "Grassroots for Greenburgh" website.
162 She gave the copy to the commission.
163

164 Mary Tobias asked Stephanie Bellino to offer any comments she may have.
165

166 Stephanie Bellino said she is the co-founder and President of the Lower Manor Woods Neighborhood
167 Association, a resident of Hartsdale since 1971, and a local business owner for more than 15 years.
168 She said she ran for office in the last election. She is the only person at the table, other than Francis
169 Sheehan, who knows what it is like to run against an incumbent Town Board with unlimited resources.
170 Supervisor Feiner starts his campaign for the next election the day after election day. As an example,
171 she received four mailings from the Supervisor just last week on various topics. The postage costs are
172 hidden in budget. Where? Supervisor Feiner uses the voter registration lists to send out his mailings
173 from Town Hall, not the property tax rolls. He is concerned with targeting voters, not property
174 owners. She and her husband each get a garbage pickup schedule. The names are written exactly as
175 listed on their voter registration cards. There are 169 families in her neighborhood association and
176 they also receive mailings based on voter registration data. Within 30 days the town should know who
177 purchased a property. Supervisor Feiner's mailings, about every subject imaginable, amount to
178 campaign literature from "day one to election day". The number of mailings and the targeting of
179 registered voters with town funds are both inappropriate.
180

181 Stephanie Bellino said cable access abuses are another problem. As a candidate in the last election she
182 was told exactly when to tape her cable segment and informed of the firm taping deadline. She taped
183 by the deadline, as did her Republican running mates. However, the Republicans could not obtain
184 copies of their tapes from the town until after the incumbents taped their segments. Special
185 arrangements were made for the incumbents to tape after the deadline. The Republicans were trying to
186 get copies of their tapes to give them to MediaOne to get their message out in Tarrytown. Tarrytown
187 has a different cable provider than the rest of Greenburgh. The tapes have to be hand-delivered. The
188 town had not even thought about showing the tapes on Tarrytown's system. The Republicans'
189 repeated requests to be allowed to obtain their tapes and transport them to Tarrytown were denied.
190 After the incumbents taped their segments and they were edited, the Republicans were told by the
191 Town Clerk, who was also a candidate, that she would deliver all the candidates' tapes to MediaOne.
192 They were notified the Wednesday before election day, which probably wasn't enough time for
193 MediaOne to schedule and play the tapes. Ms. Bellino said she is convinced the incumbents purposely
194 missed the deadline so they could first watch the Republicans' segments. She thinks the incumbents
195 reviewed the Republicans' tapes prior to taping their own segments because the incumbents had
196 responses to campaign issues raised for the first time on the tapes made by the Republicans. The cable
197 access abuses must stop. The incumbents imposed a taping deadline on the Republicans which the
198 incumbents did not have to meet and then the incumbents delayed giving the Republicans their timely
199 taped segments until after the incumbents watched and taped responses to the Republican's tapes, by
200 that time there was little time to air them.
201

202 Stephanie Bellino asked, if a matching funds reform measure is adopted, would contribution caps
203 consider the money a candidate received prior to the reform being adopted. She questioned the
204 fairness of only applying the limits to new contributions because first-time candidates cannot compete
205 with an incumbent who has already accumulated a large bank account.
206

207 Stephanie Bellino said, "the Ethics Board is a joke." The Ethics Board brushes off charges when they
208 are filed. The Town Board is immune from the board's scrutiny because the Ethics Board will only
209 consider charges if forwarded directly by the Town Board.
210

211 Stephanie Bellino questioned the fairness of how the commission was created. She objected to Mike
212 Reynolds being listed as representing the Conservative and Independence parties when he is registered
213 in the Right-to-Life party. The Conservative and Independence parties have higher registrations than
214 the Right-to-Life party. Why weren't the Conservative and Independence Parties asked to send
215 representatives? How were those decisions made? She hopes the commission is a "real" commission
216 but is skeptical because it seems to be manipulated by Supervisor Feiner. At the last Town Board
217 meeting the Supervisor proposed looking at regulating campaign signs. She asked him to remove
218 campaign signs from consideration until after the commission finishes its work. Supervisor Feiner was
219 already trying to usurp the powers of the commission. She hopes the commission isn't just for
220 Supervisor Feiner to issue self-serving press releases or to add a bullet item on his campaign literature.
221

222 Susan Mancuso said the Town is considering sign legislation to ensure the signs are taken down. The
223 commission can decide to include signs as part of its work, if desired, but all the Supervisor wants is
224 for the signs to be taken down.
225

226 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said she would like to think that all the Supervisor wants is to have signs
227 removed. However, he generally makes signage an issue during a primary election. Removal should
228 not be a major issue since candidates started taking down their signs within 24 hours of the elections
229 and all were down within one week. If removing signs is all that is involved that could be easily
230 accomplished.
231

232 Lester Steinman said that sign regulation is not simple. There are many thorny legal issues involving
233 the first amendment.
234

235 Mary Tobias introduced Carol Wielk.
236

237 Carol Wielk thanked the commission for the opportunity to speak. She said she is President of the
238 Secor Homes Civic Association (SHCA), a very active association representing more than 500 homes
239 in the Town of Greenburgh. SHCA is a member of the Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations.
240 Hopefully the committee will address the major problems that face our town relating to campaign
241 financing and its pernicious effect on the character and integrity of Town government decisions. She
242 said she may repeat what other civic association representatives have said, but in a different context.
243

244 Carol Wielk said the major concern is the "deleterious impact" caused by candidates and elected
245 officials accepting campaign contributions from (1) developers and others doing business with the
246 town and (2) from applicants seeking approval of projects before the town's boards. Although she was
247 not a candidate, she saw firsthand during the last election the unfairness of the current process. The
248 incumbents established laws supposedly to govern equal candidate access to our public cable channels.
249 It was supposed to make the process fair. The last election highlighted the unfairness of the new
250 procedures. First, the cable timeslots were not allocated based on some identifiable method. Instead,
251 the incumbent candidates were always given the best time slots, while opponents were scheduled on
252 holidays. Second, the town repeatedly replayed regular cable shows that included the incumbents as
253 hosts or guests right up to election day. The town played the shows repeatedly, claiming they were
254 exempt from the campaign appearance regulations, even though they promoted the incumbent
255 candidates. For example, Supervisor Feiner hosts a cable show with Jim Winer. Mr. Winer repeatedly
256 praises the Supervisor in one of their shows. That show was shown over and over until election day,
257 exempt from the restrictions the incumbents imposed on candidates. The exemption even applied to a
258 30 minute interview of an incumbent which aired on election day. In contrast, the incumbents strictly

259 enforced the cable restrictions against their opponents. To oversee cable access programming,
260 particularly during campaigns, she recommends an independent commission be established. It should
261 be comprised equally of Democrats and Republicans, include representatives from the other political
262 parties in Greenburgh, and be moderated by an independent party. SHCA does not support legislation
263 which gives undue influence to incumbents, such as restrictions on campaign posters.
264

265 Carol Wielk said she agreed with Stephanie Bellino's comments regarding the Ethics Board. SHCA
266 filed ethics charges with the Ethics Board and they were ignored because the Town Board did not
267 support an inquiry. The current Ethics Law has been interpreted as requiring the Town Board's
268 approval.
269

270 Carol Wielk urged the commission to look further than simply suggesting that there be public
271 financing of a question and answer campaign brochure, as reported in the newspaper. She
272 characterized such a proposal as silly and demeaning to the real purpose and intent of advocates of
273 campaign finance reform.
274

275 Del Hillgartner said he is the President of the Beaver Hill Civic Association. He confirmed all that the
276 previous speakers said. He is also a member of Greenburgh's Cable Advisory Board. The board is a
277 farce. It met three times in three years. The board met once to discuss the resolution that was later
278 adopted by the Town Board restricting candidate cable access. The cable board had no additional
279 input. The board thought the recommendations were fair. After the Town Board adopted the
280 resolution, it was put in a drawer and forgotten. The resolution doesn't work. There are intrinsic
281 problems with how the town has set up cable access. One part-time Cable Director has been placed in
282 charge of all aspects of cable other than policy and scheduling decisions. He is expected to videotape
283 and edit all Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings, and, as time
284 permits, residents' cable access shows. While it is difficult for him to do all the jobs the Town Board
285 has assigned him, the job becomes impossible to do competently by a part-time person when there is
286 an election. The town's cable access system "begs for incompetence" and deprives residents of their
287 right to be heard. Even if there is no bias by the incumbents, the cable director is paid by the Town
288 Board. There is an inherent conflict. The cable director would be involved in blowing the whistle on
289 cable if a whistle needed to be blown. It is not fair to expect all this from someone earning \$21,000/yr.
290 Additional funds are needed to hire more staff. Without additional staff, cable access and quality will
291 remain poor.
292

293 Ella Preiser said that the town receives a franchise fee of more than \$250,000/yr from Cablevision.
294 The town also receives \$50,000/yr from Cablevision specifically to buy cable equipment.
295 Greenburgh's poor cable access and quality is a deliberate decision of the Town Board to not properly
296 fund cable.
297

298 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked what the Town Board does with the cable money.
299

300 Ella Preiser said the franchise fees go into the general fund.
301

302 Del Hillgartner said the Town Board doesn't even use all of the \$50,000 for cable equipment as
303 required.
304

305 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked what is the Town Clerk's role pertaining to cable.
306

307 Del Hillgartner said the Town Clerk is solely responsible for making all policy decisions. She decides
308 when the shows are scheduled. She also interfaces with the cable company and serves as Chair of the
309 Cable Access Board.
310

311 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked who decides who gets a cable show.

312
313 Del Hillgartner responded that the selection process is mysterious, even to the Cable Access Board.
314 Cable Board members are disgusted with the process and some of the shows. The position of the
315 Town Clerk is that she can't control what is shown unless there is a show more relevant to Greenburgh
316 residents. It was the Cable Access Board that strongly advocated the CGCA having the cable show it
317 now has.
318
319 David Gottlieb said that David Glenn, a former reporter for *The Scarsdale Inquirer*, had a show and he
320 recruited his own guests.
321
322 Ella Preiser agreed, adding that David Glenn had a timeslot for some time. The issue isn't who is a
323 guest on an existing show, it is who is allowed to have a new show. Trying to get a timeslot is not
324 easy.
325
326 Sally Schaadt said that attorneys need to look into the laws governing cable to determine if the town's
327 actions are legal.
328
329 Harriet Leib said that the commission plans to break into subcommittees to address specific issues,
330 including cable access problems.
331
332 Carol Wielk asked if it would be appropriate for community members to provide input to the
333 subcommittees.
334
335 Harriet Leib said that she was confident that any subcommittee needing input would request all the
336 help necessary to do its work.
337
338 Lorrin Brown said he is the President of the North Elmsford Civic Association. He echoed all the
339 comments previously made and added that an additional issue is that two Town Board members are
340 more concerned about running for higher office than serving Greenburgh residents. The residents
341 should come first but the incumbents are just using their office to campaign for the next election.
342 There is a lot of development going on in Greenburgh by those making contributions to their
343 campaigns. Elected officials should represent us but instead they get the contributions and the
344 Greenburgh residents are left with an over-developed town.
345
346 David Gottlieb said the next election for Supervisor Feiner is a federal election. What impact will the
347 commission's reforms have on a candidate's ability to take money for a federal campaign?
348
349 Francis Sheehan said that the Ethics Law would govern local and federal elections if it was amended to
350 specifically prohibit incumbents from accepting contributions from developers or applicants seeking
351 approvals from the town boards.
352
353 Sally Schaadt said that the current Ethics Law could be interpreted as already prohibiting such
354 contributions.
355
356 Mark Baron asked if Supervisor Feiner can shift funds from his federal campaign to a local campaign
357 if he loses the federal election.
358
359 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said she understands campaign rules allow local campaign donations to be
360 used for federal races, but contributions intended for a federal race cannot be used for a local race.
361
362 Harriet Leib thanked the civic association representatives. She said the commission heard all that was
363 said. The representatives have given the commission many issues to address. The next part of meeting
364 is the business session. She thanked the representatives for their attendance.
365

366 Ella Preiser asked if the business session was open to the public and, if so, may the civic association
367 representatives stay.

368
369 Harriet Leib invited everyone to stay.
370

371 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that the commission previously decided that the public cannot speak
372 during the business meeting, similar to how town work sessions are conducted.
373

374 Carol Wielk asked how meetings are scheduled because she would like to post the dates on the
375 Grassroots for Greenburgh website.
376

377 Harriet Leib announced the dates of the next scheduled meetings: March 17th at 8:30 a.m. and March
378 30th at 8:30 a.m. Both meetings will be held at Rochambeau School, 228 Fisher Avenue, White Plains,
379 room 121.
380

381 Ella Preiser suggested that more evening meetings be scheduled.
382

383 Harriet Leib said that some commissioners could not make this meeting because it was in the evening.
384 There is no one good time.
385

386 Mary Tobias asked if any future meetings will be held at Town Hall.
387

388 Harriet Leib said that she prefers not using Town Hall to avoid the perception of conflict or
389 interference by the town.
390

391 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said it was time to begin the business session.
392

393 Carol Wielk asked if the commission's minutes are available to the public and, if so, can she obtain
394 copies.
395

396 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that approval of the minutes is the next item on the agenda.
397

398 Carol Wielk asked if the minutes will be available to the public because she would like to post them on
399 the Grassroots for Greenburgh website.
400

401 Harriet Leib said the minutes will be available to the public after approval.
402

403 A general discussion about the minutes ensued and several minor amendments were proposed.
404

405 The February 3, 2000 meeting minutes were approved unanimously as amended.
406

407 The February 18, 2000 meeting minutes were approved unanimously as amended.
408

409 Harriet Leib said the next item on the agenda is the budget. Kathleen Rutherford cannot provide funds
410 for the commission because she is directing her attention to the county level. The Town Board has
411 offered financial support.
412

413 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the commission decided at the last meeting that it would create an
414 appearance of conflict if the Town Board funded the commission's independent study. The question is
415 how do we fund the commission knowing now that Kathleen Rutherford cannot provide funding. Ms.
416 Lederer-Plaskett read the draft letter which requested \$1,500 to cover copy costs, refreshments,
417 postage, etc. Because this issue was discussed at the last meeting the letter was not sent. The chairs
418 decided to again present the issue of funding to the commission.
419

420 Mary Tobias suggested asking the Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations for some of the funds
421 needed.

422
423 Lester Steinman said the commission should send a letter to both the LWV and the Greenburgh Town
424 Board since they jointly created the commission. They should be responsible for working out the
425 funding.

426
427 Harriet Leib said the County Executive's office funded the Singer Commission. It wasn't considered a
428 conflict. The County Executive even assigned a full-time person to work for the Singer Commission.
429 There is no sense asking the LWV for money because it doesn't have any to offer.

430
431 Lester Steinman said asking the Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations for funding doesn't solve
432 the conflict issue. The Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations has just as much interest in the
433 outcome from this commission as the Town Board.

434
435 Elizabeth Daniel said that, by addressing the letter to both the LWV and the Town Board and letting
436 them work out funding, the commission would adequately avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest
437 that would result from the commission directly soliciting the funds from the Town Board. Even if the
438 Town Board ultimately provides all the funds because the LWV cannot afford to contribute, the
439 appearance of a conflict would be reduced.

440
441 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the Town Board has already agreed to provide the funds.

442
443 Francis Sheehan said the decision before the commission is very similar to what he went through as a
444 candidate in the last election, what all candidates go through. He decided early on not to accept any
445 contributions from developers or applicants doing business with the town because there could be an
446 appearance of a conflict of interest. That decision limited his ability to get his message out. The
447 commission is now faced with the same type of decision. The commission has a worthy cause but
448 needs money to function. How do you fund what you believe to be an important cause worth funding?
449 We are here because we want to ensure that candidates fund their campaigns in a proper manner. The
450 commission must guard against falling into the same trap as many candidates. Any appearance of a
451 conflict must be avoided. Asking the Town Board to pay for the commission's refreshments would be
452 inappropriate since the Town Board does not provide such funds to the Planning Board, Zoning Board,
453 or themselves. In fact, the Supervisor recently wrote that "wining and dining" a consultant could
454 influence the consultant's opinion. The major expense for the commission is duplication costs. The
455 commission could utilize the town's copy policy which applies for all town-related documents. Since
456 the commission would be using the standard copy policy that applies for other groups, any conflict of
457 interest would be minimized. The documents would have to be submitted to the town's copy center for
458 duplication.

459
460 Susan Mancuso said that the commission doesn't want to hold meetings in Town Hall to avoid the
461 appearance of being influenced by the Town Board. Asking the Town Board to pay the commission's
462 expenses is no different. Anything that could cause a perception of a conflict needs to be avoided.

463
464 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked what commission members thought of Francis Sheehan's suggestion.
465 There was a general consensus that the commission should not ask the Town Board for funding.

466
467 Claire Lee said she could bring coffee.

468
469 Harriet Leib suggested the commission "lumber along" without external funding.

470
471 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked if the commission should use the town's copy privileges. There was
472 no consensus.

473
474 Francis Sheehan said he would take care of distributing the meeting minutes.
475
476 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett suggested the commission continue with the agenda.
477
478 Sally Schaadt said the scheduling of the meetings is a problem for her. She can't make morning
479 meetings. She asked if she could send a substitute for each of the morning meetings.
480
481 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said Ms. Schaadt could send a substitute to morning meetings.
482
483 Harriet Leib said she prefers having Ms. Schaadt present. Many of the commissioners have a problem
484 making the meetings. We have several absences today. They don't have substitutes. It would be very
485 cumbersome trying to do the commission's work with substitutes. It's better to not allow substitutes.
486 The public hearings, which we must set, will be in the evening.
487
488 Mary Tobias said that, at the last meeting, Andrew Goodman suggested holding public hearings in
489 April.
490
491 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said we need more time.
492
493 Elizabeth Daniel asked if the commission expects to have a specific proposal in place by the time the
494 public hearings are held.
495
496 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that we should have a clearer idea of the direction the commission
497 should pursue before the hearings commence.
498
499 Lester Steinman said the commission should have something proposed in advance so the public has
500 something to comment on at the public hearing.
501
502 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett suggested setting two meetings in April to give everyone adequate notice.
503 Tuesday, April 11th, at 7:30 p. m. was selected.
504
505 Francis Sheehan said the public hearings should be in Town Hall. It may be a good idea to keep the
506 commission's work sessions out of Town Hall but it would be inappropriate to ask Greenburgh
507 residents to travel to White Plains to comment about a Town of Greenburgh initiative. Having the
508 meetings at Town Hall would also increase the likelihood of getting a good turnout.
509
510 Harriet Leib agreed. Susan Mancuso was asked to explore the availability of Town Hall for the public
511 hearings. Selection of a second public hearing date was postponed pending that determination.
512
513 Harriet Leib read the following list of documents available to the commission to date:
514 1. Local Campaign Finance Reform: Case Studies, Innovations and Model Legislation, a report by the
515 National Civic League
516 2. Fact Sheet: National Civic League booklet ...
517 3. Singer Commission: Outline for Campaign Financing
518 4. Letter from Francis Sheehan re Campaign Finance Reform and Greenburgh's Code of Ethics
519 5. League of Woman Voters of Westchester Fact Sheet: Campaign Finance Reform as proposed by
520 the Singer Commission, with an attachment of act (85-1998) authorizing computerization of
521 campaign finance records
522 6. Town of Yorktown proposal for cable access (defeated)
523 7. Subsidizing Political Campaigns: The Varieties & Values of Public Financing, by Elizabeth Daniel,
524 Brennan Center for Justice
525

526 Harriet Leib said she spoke to Yorktown Councilman Nicholas Bianco. He will come to the next
527 meeting of the commission if desired. She also spoke to Westchester County Legislator George
528 Latimer. He has agreed to speak at the next meeting about what happened to the Singer Commission
529 and its recommendations. He is very knowledgeable and can help explain the pitfalls they faced.
530

531 Elizabeth Daniel distributed copies of her publication, Subsidizing Political Campaigns, to attendees
532 who did not already have a copy.
533

534 Harriet Leib referred to agenda items III, Review of Goals, and IV, Goals/Subcommittees. She said
535 one of the subcommittees will deal with cable television. Another subcommittee will examine
536 newspapers and advertising during campaign season. The County Legislators recently banned
537 legislators seeking re-election from distributing taxpayer-financed newsletters during the campaign
538 session. If the vote wasn't unanimous, it was close to unanimous.
539

540 Charlotte Schienberg said the vote was unanimous.
541

542 Lester Steinman asked what legal authority the legislators have to enforce the mailing restriction.
543

544 Harriet Leib said they simply voted on it.
545

546 Lester Steinman said the commission needs to invite the Town Clerk and a representative of Gannett
547 newspapers to a meeting.
548

549 Harriet Leib asked if the Town Clerk and Gannett representative should meet with the entire group or a
550 subcommittee.
551

552 Lester Steinman said everyone should hear what they have to say.
553

554 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked who from Gannett should be invited.
555

556 Lester Steinman suggested getting someone high up the chain.
557

558 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett agreed, adding that reporters change constantly.
559

560 Elizabeth Daniel said that the cable committee should be familiar with cable rules before the Town
561 Clerk comes so meaningful questions may be asked.
562

563 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the committee members need to be familiar with all the articles that
564 have appeared in the *The Journal News* before a representative from Gannett attends a meeting.
565

566 Harriet Leib asked if there was consensus that cable access should be the subject of a separate
567 subcommittee. There was.
568

569 Harriet Leib said the next subcommittee involves the newspapers. She mentioned that the commission
570 was cited on a paid subscription political website, www.NYCapitolFAX.com. David Gottlieb, the
571 reporter from *The Scarsdale Inquirer* who has been covering the commission, has a daughter, Jane
572 Gottlieb, who is a reporter in Albany. Ms. Leib read a portion of a recent edition of "News Digest",
573 which is part of the website offering: "Westchester's Town of Greenburgh, pop. 85,000, where a new
574 exploratory committee will take till June to study an array of options. The county League of Women
575 Voters says that the last County Exec's race cost \$4 million; that county legislative races can cost
576 \$150,000; and that Greenburgh town races might exceed \$10,000. It's unclear whether Greenburgh's
577 committee will recommend spending limits, public funding to put candidates on local television, or
578 nothing at all. Regardless, the system's [sic] likely to be voluntary rather than legal, since state
579 election law supercedes local laws. Also, anything they come up with, just like in Alta [, Utah],

580 Crested Butte [, Colorado] and NYC, affects only the local races. So far, meanwhile, state and fed
581 leaders talk about finance reform and leave it to that.”
582

583 Harriet Leib asked if the next subcommittee listed on the agenda is acceptable: “Newspapers and
584 advertising during campaign season”.
585

586 Francis Sheehan said the Newspapers Subcommittee doesn’t require the same level of work that the
587 others require.
588

589 Lester Steinman asked what the term “lobbyists” means in the proposed subcommittee “Public
590 financing/ Contribution and Spending Limits/ Disclosure”.
591

592 Harriet Leib said the term could apply to the developers who have been mentioned so frequently as
593 contributing to campaigns.
594

595 Lester Steinman said developers are not lobbyists as the term is generally used.
596

597 Harriet Leib suggested rearranging the subcommittee topics to better group them.
598

599 Harriet Leib, after commission members offered their opinions, announced the subcommittees created
600 by consensus:

- 601 1. Cable Access and Newspapers
- 602 2. Ethics
- 603 3. Public Financing, Contribution and Spending Limits, Disclosure
- 604 4. Legal Issues, including model legislation and oversight board

605

606 Lester Steinman said he had a good idea which committee he would be on.
607

608 Harriet Leib asked the four attorneys on the commission-- Elizabeth Daniel, Susan Mancuso and
609 Lester Steinman, as well as Andrew Goodman in absentia-- to serve on the Legal Issues
610 Subcommittee. All present agreed.
611

612 Harriet Leib asked for volunteers to serve on the Cable Access and Newspapers Subcommittee. Claire
613 Lee, Susan Mancuso, Francis Sheehan, and Mary Tobias volunteered.
614

615 Harriet Leib asked for volunteers for the Ethics Subcommittee.
616

617 Francis Sheehan asked if members could serve on more than one subcommittee. He expressed concern
618 about being on more than one subcommittee if the plan is to break into subcommittees during
619 commission meetings.
620

621 Harriet Leib said the subcommittees would likely meet at times other than regular commission
622 meetings. Members are not limited in the number of subcommittees they may join.
623

624 Harriet Leib, Catherine Lederer-Plaskett, Charlotte Schienberg, Francis Sheehan, and Lester Steinman
625 volunteered to serve on the Ethics Subcommittee.
626

627 Harriet Leib asked for volunteers to serve on the Public Financing, Contribution and Spending Limits,
628 and Disclosure. She noted that there are several members absent. In absentia she asked Andrew
629 Goodman and Erin Malloy to serve. Lester Steinman volunteered.
630

631 Harriet Leib said that Sally Schaadt had not volunteered for any subcommittee.
632

633 Sally Schaadt said she was not sure how many meetings she would be able to attend since she cannot
634 attend morning meetings. She said she would try the Cable Access and Newspaper Subcommittee.
635

636 Harriet Leib asked Elizabeth Daniel to discuss issues involved in funding an oversight board.
637

638 Elizabeth Daniel said commission members need to be careful not to create an elaborate system for
639 local campaigns, a system too large to fund. Without an oversight board, reforms won't work.
640 However, Greenburgh taxpayers may not be willing to fund the oversight board that is needed. Serious
641 consideration should be given to creating an oversight board consortium with other towns and villages.
642 By spreading the costs over several municipalities, creating the needed oversight board might be more
643 acceptable to the taxpayers. It is an option to explore.
644

645 Harriet Leib said that she tried to get representatives from the NYC Campaign Finance Board to attend
646 a commission meeting, but hasn't been able to do so. She read the list of members who volunteered at
647 the last commission meeting to visit the NYC Campaign Finance Board: Andrew Goodman, Catherine
648 Lederer-Plaskett, Claire Lee, Harriet Leib, Erin Malloy, Rev. Wilbert Preston, Francis Sheehan and
649 Mary Tobias, schedules permitting. Ms. Leib said the address is 40 Rector street, 7th floor. She asked
650 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett to write a memo to the NYC Campaign Finance Board to set up the visit.
651 She said the NYC board's phone number is 212-306-7150. Nicole Gordon is *the* person to whom the
652 group should speak.
653

654 Need to notify public of meeting dates, including hearings.
655

656 Harriet Leib asked Lester Steinman to chair the Legal Issues Subcommittee, Claire Lee to chair the
657 Cable Access and Newspapers Subcommittee, Charlotte Schienberg to chair the Ethics Subcommittee,
658 and Catherine Lederer-Plaskett to chair the Public Financing, Contribution and Spending Limits and
659 Disclosure Subcommittee. All agreed.
660

661 Mary Tobias handed out articles that contained Supervisor Feiner's goals for the commission.
662

663 Charlotte Schienberg said she needs a copy of Francis Sheehan's Ethics Law proposal.
664

665 Harriet Leib asked if there was any other business. There was no response.
666

667 Harriet Leib was asked to repeat the subcommittee members which she did.
668

669 Cable Access and Newspapers Subcommittee:

670 -- Claire Lee, chair; Susan Mancuso, Sally Schaadt, Francis Sheehan, and Mary Tobias

671 Ethics Subcommittee:

672 -- Charlotte Schienberg, chair; Harriet Leib, Catherine Lederer-Plaskett, Francis Sheehan, and Lester Steinman

673 Legal Issues Subcommittee, including model legislation and oversight board:

674 -- Lester Steinman, chair; Elizabeth Daniel, Andrew Goodman, and Susan Mancuso

675 Public Financing, Contribution and Spending Limits, and Disclosure Subcommittee:

676 -- Catherine Lederer-Plaskett, chair; Andrew Goodman, Erin Malloy and Lester Steinman
677

678 The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.
679
680

681 Respectfully submitted,

682 Francis Sheehan, Commission Secretary