

1 **GREENBURGH CAMPAIGN FINANCE COMMISSION**  
2 **MEETING MINUTES -- JUNE 15, 2000**  
3 **(DRAFT)**  
4

5 Present:

6 Andrew Goodman, Catherine Lederer-Plaskett, Claire Lee, Harriet Leib, Erin Malloy, Susan Mancuso,  
7 Anne Nelson, Sally Schaadt, Charlotte Schienberg, Ervin Schliefer, Francis Sheehan, Lester Steinman,  
8 Mary Tobias  
9

10 Speakers (in order of first appearance):

11 Stephanie Bellino President, Lower Manor Woods Neighborhood Association  
12 Ella Preiser Secretary/Spokesperson, Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations  
13 Co-founder, Grassroots for Greenburgh  
14 William Pohlmann Chairman, Greenburgh Republican Party  
15

16 Observers: David Gottlieb, reporter/photographer, The Scarsdale Inquirer  
17  
18

19 Absent:

20 Elizabeth Daniel, Rev. Wilbert Preston, Mike Reynolds  
21  
22

23 The tenth meeting of the commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in room 131, at Rochambeau  
24 School, 228 Fisher Avenue, White Plains.  
25

26 Co-chair Harriet Leib welcomed the attendees and then recognized Anne Nelson, stating that she  
27 chaired the first commission meeting and has been following the commission's work.  
28

29 Anne Nelson, from the League of Women Voters County Government Committee, thanked the  
30 commission members for all their effort and time dedicated to doing the important work of the  
31 commission. She said she has not been able to attend many of the meetings but that she has been able  
32 to follow the commission's work by reading the detailed minutes of the meetings that Francis Sheehan  
33 generates and sends to her. Reading the minutes makes her feel as though she is sitting at the  
34 discussion table with the commission members. She thanked Francis Sheehan for helping keep her and  
35 everyone else informed about the commission's work.  
36

37 Harriet Leib said that there are guest speakers who wanted to supplement their public hearing  
38 comments. She recognized Stephanie Bellino.  
39

40 Stephanie Bellino distributed a letter that she wrote to commission members, dated June 10, 2000. She  
41 asked that her written statements be included in the minutes and considered by the commission. The  
42 contents of the letter follow:  
43

44 First of all, I would like to congratulate the members for all the time and effort that they have put forth  
45 regarding this enormous undertaking which is absolutely needed in our town.  
46

47 I have reviewed the proposed recommendations distributed at the public hearing held on Monday, June 5,  
48 2000, and I have the following comments:  
49

50 First, as to the Cable Subcommittee recommendation:  
51

- 52 1. The last recommendation regarding an independent, non-profit cable access television board should be  
53 the priority, for without this, nothing else will be accomplished regarding cable television reform in  
54 Greenburgh. Just look at what happened with the Greenburgh Antenna Review Board televised  
55 meeting. The establishment of this independent board is the only way to ensure fair and equal access to  
56 Greenburgh's Cable Access Channels for all candidates, all citizens, all organizations and all boards.  
57 This board should have the authority to mandate equal access for all candidates without interference  
58 from any other board or organization.  
59
- 60 2. Access should be given to all candidates even if the candidate does not participate in any other  
61 campaign finance reform initiatives that may come forth as your recommendations. I also believe that  
62 all political segments should be played on a continuous basis the weekend prior to any election whether  
63 it is a primary or general election.  
64

65 Secondly, as to the Ethics Subcommittee recommendation:  
66

- 67 1. The establishment of a campaign oversight committee-- whether it be nonpartisan or bipartisan-- is  
68 worthless unless the process and procedure is described as to how any ethical or financial issues will be  
69 directed to, delivered and dealt with by this committee and what absolute authority this committee will  
70 have to punish.  
71
- 72 2. The elimination of conflicts of interest-- elected officials should be required to recuse themselves under  
73 ALL circumstances from voting on a contributor's application or any application presented by another  
74 who has contributed.  
75
- 76 3. "Create a level playing field for candidates". Taxpayer-financed mailings by incumbents should be  
77 banned during the period of six months prior to general election and primary if applicable. As discussed  
78 in one of your meetings, any pertinent information needed to be given to the general public regarding an  
79 issue within a community can be addressed by the department head involved in the issuer-- not by the  
80 political candidate and without the political candidate's name being used in the notification.  
81

82 Thirdly, as to the Public Finance Subcommittee recommendation:  
83

- 84 1. It is difficult now for volunteer treasurers to comply with the regulations of the Board of Elections. The  
85 rules for financial disclosure should be the same as the Board of Elections with the exception of adding  
86 an additional filing date for the town.  
87
- 88 2. The limit for contributions should be less than \$1,000-- say \$500.  
89
- 90 3. All candidates should pledge not to accept contributions from anyone doing business with the town,  
91 including the unions.  
92
- 93 4. I agree that there should be more than one debate held during the election season and they should follow  
94 the League's guideline. However, in the case of a primary where one party refuses to participate in the  
95 debate-- such as a primary for the conservative party where only one person is available, it should be  
96 stated that the other party refused to participate and time should be given to the individual who agreed to  
97 participate to at least give a 5 minute statement.  
98
- 99 5. I am against any further taxation for financing of campaigns. I believe that the residents of Greenburgh  
100 feel that the tax burden is already high, and those of us who have followed the "green space  
101 referendum" know that the town leaders already tried to use the funds in an improper manner and are  
102 currently using the monies collected from cable franchise fees for other purposes as stated by Paul  
103 Feiner at the town board meeting where the budget was discussed.  
104

105 I am sorry that I was unable to get my thoughts to you earlier, but I hope that you will consider them when  
106 you come up with your final recommendations.

107  
108 Ms. Bellino provided an overview of the above written comments and supplemented them with the  
109 following statements: If additional campaign finance disclosure is recommended, the commission  
110 should ensure that someone is available to answer questions from volunteer campaign treasurers, who  
111 are already overburdened with complicated filing requirements. Contribution disclosure requirements  
112 should remain consistent with the current Board of Elections' threshold of more than \$99, to make  
113 record keeping easy. However, the cap on individual contributions should be lowered to \$500. The  
114 pledge to not take contributions from anyone doing business with the town must include the unions  
115 representing town employees. Mr. Feiner collected more than \$6,000 from the Teamsters Union and  
116 then directly negotiated town contracts with them. She tried to file ethics charges regarding the union  
117 contributions but the town's Ethics Board would not entertain the charges. She concluded by stating  
118 that all the local reform initiatives proposed are predicated on incentives that require independent  
119 control of cable access franchise fees and independent control of cable access programming. The  
120 commission needs to ensure they are truly independent in order to be fair to all citizens and groups in  
121 Greenburgh and provide a level playing field for all candidates. It is our only hope.

122  
123 Claire Lee said that everyone is already entitled to cable access time. Ensuring fairness of cable access  
124 cannot be avoided. One of the issues for the commission is how to provide more cable access time to  
125 candidates who agree to reforms.

126  
127 Ms. Bellino said she agrees that everyone is entitled to cable access time but there is a difference  
128 between being entitled to something and actually getting it. During the last election the town unfairly  
129 administered and manipulated access to cable television. It really wasn't fair access.

130  
131 Claire Lee said that we already know it wasn't fairly implemented but everyone is entitled to it. The  
132 commission needs to ensure the access residents are entitled to is actually received. In Larchmont/  
133 Mamaroneck the Town Board never took over control of cable or the cable access franchise fees. She  
134 doesn't know how it can be rested away from the Greenburgh Town Board at this point.

135  
136 Mary Tobias said the Town Board has to decide if it really wants campaign reform. If so, the Town  
137 Board will agree to give up control of cable access to a totally independent board.

138  
139 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said one of the issues to discuss is a calendar. There is no way the  
140 commission can do its work within the Town Board's timeframe to get a referendum on the ballot this  
141 fall. The commission needs to consider meeting in the fall.

142  
143 Harriet Leib suggested talking about the calendar later, after first hearing any additional public  
144 comments regarding the subcommittee recommendations.

145  
146 Ella Preiser was introduced. She agreed that resting control of cable access from the Town Board  
147 would be a formidable task. They won't be willing to concede control. However, they must since the  
148 commission is relying solely on cable access as an incentive to candidates to voluntarily agree to  
149 campaign reforms. Therefore, cable access must be independently operated and funded or the  
150 commission will have wasted its time working on these proposals. Cable cannot be an incentive unless  
151 fair access is assured. She summarized her concerns in a letter, dated June 15, 2000, which she  
152 distributed to commission members:

153  
154 I am writing this memo to provide additional input after more carefully reviewing the Commission's  
155 recommendations that were made available at the June 5, 2000 Public Hearing.

156

## 157 Cable Subcommittee Recommendations

158  
159 The Cable Subcommittee recommends "increased cable access time be used as an incentive for candidates  
160 to sign on to local campaign finance reform" and the Public Finance Subcommittee recommends that  
161 "significantly increased" cable access be "the primary or sole incentive" for any campaign reform measures.  
162

163 If cable access is the linchpin that will make campaign finance reform work in Greenburgh, the Cable  
164 Subcommittee must rearrange the order of its recommendations and place as its number one  
165 recommendation that "An independent, non-profit cable access board be created..." However, it defies  
166 logic to believe that incumbents who wish to be re-elected every two to four years will relinquish control  
167 over and/or fairly administer a program that might tend to level the playing field and perhaps jeopardize  
168 their chance at re-election. The golden rule -- he who owns the gold, rules! The "you betcha" attitude about  
169 the power of the incumbency and cable TV access was demonstrated in numerous ways during the 1999  
170 election year, particularly when the incumbents chose not to follow the very rules that they had  
171 promulgated. The Commission is betting on significant cable access policy changes for its reforms to work  
172 and, therefore, needs to be much more specific in what those changes should be and include consideration of  
173 the following:  
174

175 1. Who would create the proposed "independent, non-profit cable access board?" How? A truly  
176 independent cable TV board with adequate resources and a bit of creativity would find there are no  
177 insurmountable problems and could make cable access an attractive incentive for voluntary campaign  
178 reforms. If the Town Board refuses to turn over operational and financial control of cable access to the  
179 proposed independent board, it would appear the Commission will have wasted its time since an  
180 independent cable access system is an integral part of all of the Commission's proposed local campaign  
181 finance reforms. Is there a plan B?  
182

183 2. A baseline amount of studio time would appear to be one-half hour each month of the election period  
184 since that is what other hosts/producers presumably are provided. During the 1999 election year, the  
185 following number of candidates qualified for the ballot (primary and/or general election) and could have  
186 been entitled to a cable program under the proposed recommendation:  
187

- 188 3 – Supervisor (1 DEM, 1 REP, 1 CON)  
189 7 – Councilperson (3 DEM, 2 REP, 2 CON)  
190 3 – Town Clerk (1 DEM, 1 REP, 1 RTL)  
191 8 – Town Justice (4 DEM, 2 REP, 2 RTL)  
192

193 If each of the 21 eligible candidates had requested a separate taping during 1999, a total of 9 to 10½  
194 hours of studio time would have been required each month. Additional time would be required to  
195 prepare the tapes with titles, etc. [Note: Judges have 4-year terms so they won't run in 2001, but  
196 theoretically even more than 21 candidates could seek election in 2001.]  
197

198 Would all candidates be entitled to tape cable programs during the months of May, June and July (for  
199 broadcast in June, July, August and September) - or only those running in a primary? Limiting cable  
200 access to only those running in the primary could severely limit name-recognition of some candidates in  
201 the November general election. However, reducing show length would severely hurt primary  
202 candidates who may not make it to the general election if they don't gain name-recognition during the  
203 summer months.  
204

205 3. Would a candidate be allowed to appear on another host/producer's program in addition to his/her  
206 election taped programs? If so, would there be a limit?  
207

208 4. Would a candidate who runs as part of a "team" be permitted to interview and/or endorse other  
209 members of the team in his/her separate taped segments each month or would the taped segments be  
210 team-member specific?  
211

- 212 5. Would candidates who participate in reform measures be permitted to tape additional programs or  
213 merely have the previously taped program(s) replayed on the weekends?  
214
- 215 6. How will Danny Gold's question about scheduling be addressed? Baseline monthly taped programs  
216 would air twice a month on Channel 71 and weekly on Channel 73. To air 10½ hours of tapes (for 21  
217 candidates) involves adding another two hours to each day's scheduling, Monday through Friday. Town  
218 Board, Planning Board, ARB and ZBA meetings often run late into the night and are cablecast live  
219 and/or rebroadcast on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and Ardsley Village Board  
220 meetings air on some Mondays. Thus, scheduling on Channel 71 could be difficult unless there is a  
221 major re-structuring and expansion of the schedule, which the Town Board appears resistant to do.  
222
- 223 a) How would timeslots be determined for airing programs? By lottery? Would timeslots be fixed for  
224 the entire election period? While a fixed timeslot would be helpful in designing a candidate's palm  
225 card, it might not help to level the playing field if one candidate's program is scheduled for a non-  
226 primetime airing (e.g., 4 p.m. or 11:30 p.m.) while opponents receive primetime timeslots.  
227
- 228 b) How will debates be scheduled on cable? The Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations' (CGCA)  
229 pre-primary debate was telecast live and rebroadcast on Labor Day. When the CGCA objected to  
230 the holiday airing, the Town Clerk promised a second date for rebroadcast and the CGCA  
231 publicized that date, but the debate never aired.  
232
- 233 7. Finally, the Subcommittee should determine whether cable shows sent out from the Town should/could  
234 be pre-empted by the Villages. Approximately one half of Town voters live within the incorporated  
235 Villages and efforts should be made to ensure that Village residents have an opportunity to be informed  
236 about candidates running for election. In addition, the Village of Tarrytown is not part of the same  
237 cable system as the Town of Greenburgh and special efforts must be made to reach Tarrytown voters.  
238

#### 239 Ethics Subcommittee Recommendations

240 Please consider the following as supplementing my comments at the hearing:  
241

- 242
- 243 1. The preface addresses "elected town officials" and thus applies to all three subsections that follow. The  
244 Subcommittee needs to alter the wording to include all candidates-- not just incumbents. As written, the  
245 recommendation suggests an oversight committee would be limited to addressing the actions/activities  
246 of only the incumbents.  
247
- 248 2. The first recommendation -- "establish a campaign oversight committee" -- does not spell out the  
249 mechanism for establishing the committee or what kinds of authority the committee would have. Would  
250 it take an act of the Town Board to establish the oversight committee? Does the Subcommittee envision  
251 this oversight committee as having the authority to impose any punishment beyond shame? Please note  
252 that the "shame factor" requires the participation of the news media, which has been repeatedly shown  
253 difficult to obtain.  
254
- 255 3. Although it might not be the Commission's charge to suggest revisions to the Town's Ethics Code, the  
256 mechanism of the oversight committee getting to the Ethics Board needs to be defined.  
257
- 258 4. Regarding conflicts of interest, the Subcommittee needs to address Mr. Gold's comment regarding  
259 under what "certain conditions" an elected official would be required to recuse him/herself. This  
260 provision appears to apply to only the Supervisor and Councilpersons who vote on issues. The Town  
261 Clerk, the Tax Receiver and the Town Justices all deal with suppliers either directly or through  
262 recommendations to the Town Board. Will provision be made to eliminate potential "conflict of  
263 interest" in these critical elected Town positions, too?  
264
- 265 5. The Subcommittee should clarify the statement: "Taxpayer-financed mailings by incumbents should be  
266 reviewed." What constitutes a "mailing?" Is it the number of people mailed to? The use of election

267 district labels? Do "mailings" include e-mail or website information? Who would do the reviewing?,  
268 the oversight committee?  
269

270 6. Regarding the use of an "incumbent's name, voice or likeness in public ads" -- should this include the  
271 Town's web site? Does it include the Town's "Guide to Programs, Activities and Services?" If so,  
272 would the Subcommittee eliminate not only the letters from the Town Board members and the Town  
273 Clerk but also eliminate mention that the Town Clerk is on the Brochure Committee or that Diana  
274 Juettner is Liaison to the Library Board, etc.? In the last election, the Town's "Guide to Programs,  
275 Activities and Services," which includes individual statements by the incumbents, as well as summaries  
276 of the Town Board's accomplishments, was mailed to all Town residents the week before the primary  
277 election. Is the recommendation that the mailings be re-scheduled or that the incumbents' names be  
278 removed?  
279

280 Public Finance Subcommittee  
281

282 Please consider the following as supplementing my comments at the hearing:  
283

284 1. The Subcommittee recommends "more frequent" disclosure. As Ms. Wielk requested, this should be  
285 better defined. How often is "more frequent?" Please remember that most candidates have 'volunteer'  
286 treasurers. These volunteers would be required to prepare the state-required documents in addition to  
287 the "more frequent and more descriptive" documents that the Subcommittee is suggesting. State law  
288 already requires a total of 8 filings a year if a primary is involved. (5 if no primary in an election year.)  
289

290 2. The second bullet states that "participating candidates should limit individual contributions for each  
291 election ...." Contributions should also be limited from corporations, other political candidates' political  
292 committees, union or trade organizations, PACs and other entities. The Subcommittee should  
293 recommend the dollar limit. Even total disclosure would not stop those who wish to give more than the  
294 current \$1000+ limitation as contributors could offer the funds through family members or friends. As  
295 Mr. Pohlmann noted, total disclosure might discourage those who fear retribution. NYS election law  
296 does not limit the amount a candidate and his/her spouse can spend on an election. Is the Commission  
297 considering a cap on the amount that the participating candidate and his/her spouse could use to fund a  
298 campaign? In other words, would a rich candidate who totally self-finances his/her campaign without  
299 small donations be considered compliant with the local reform measures and entitled to increased cable  
300 access, etc?  
301

302 3. Does the third bullet apply only to Town Board candidates? The stated example -- "(such as developers  
303 doing business before the town's boards)" is limiting. What about candidates for Town Clerk, Tax  
304 Receiver or Town Justice? Shouldn't all elected incumbents be required to pledge not to accept  
305 contributions also from suppliers who they might use or recommend? The Subcommittee also needs to  
306 address Mr. Pohlmann's question about how a non-incumbent would know what is an "interested"  
307 contribution. The ability to return "interested" contributions once identified, which was mentioned in  
308 the Commission's meeting minutes, but is not part of the recommendation, would partly address Mr.  
309 Pohlmann's concern.  
310

311 4. Requiring candidates to participate in a minimum number of debates presupposes that the LWV or some  
312 other group will sponsor these debates. The Subcommittee should attempt to obtain a commitment from  
313 the group(s) and also a commitment from the Town Board that the meeting room will be made available  
314 for the debates. Arrangements also have to be made to ensure cable coverage. In addition to requiring a  
315 minimum number of debates, the debates should be of sufficient length to cover a number of issues.  
316 Many of the 50+ people who attended the CGCA pre-primary [debate] described it as helpful, as did  
317 those who watched it on cable TV. The CGCA devoted an hour to the Democratic candidates for Town  
318 Justice and an hour to the Democratic candidates for Town Councilperson. Even with this amount of  
319 time, there were a substantial number of people who did not get the opportunity to ask their questions  
320 during the debates. If the Republicans and Conservatives had chosen to participate that night and the

321 same amount of time had to be divided among four debates, the usefulness of the debates would have  
322 been limited.  
323

324 5. In response to Mr. Pohlmann's comment that a candidate who refuses to debate should be penalized,  
325 that candidate would be penalized by not receiving additional cable TV time. Please note, it is not just  
326 the LWV guidelines that prohibit "empty chair" debates if the debate is carried over radio, TV or cable.  
327 According to the instructions promulgated by the LWV, the Federal Communications Commission  
328 regulations apply to all radio, television broadcasters and cablecasters and require that "at least two  
329 candidates must appear in any debate." Perhaps the Commission could address Mr. Pohlmann's "empty  
330 chair" complaint by delineating how the proposed "shame factor" would be employed. Does the  
331 Commission envision the proposed oversight committee as having a public relations/press relations  
332 component?  
333

334 Again, I do thank the Commission members for their hard work in addressing these important issues.  
335

336 Mrs. Preiser, while reviewing her written statements, said that she wasn't sure how the cable system in  
337 Greenburgh was wired. Different areas of Greenburgh seem to get different programs and Tarrytown  
338 has a totally separate cable system than other areas of Greenburgh.  
339

340 Ms. Bellino said Tarrytown's cable system recently merged with Cablevision so the difficulties with  
341 Greenburgh cable access program distribution to Tarrytown residents may change.  
342

343 Mrs. Preiser said she hopes the merger helps resolve the Tarrytown program distribution problems.  
344

345 Mrs. Preiser asked the commission if the preface on the Ethics Subcommittee recommendations was a  
346 typo or was the intention to make the recommendations apply solely to incumbents.  
347

348 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that the town's Ethics Law does not apply to candidates, per se; it  
349 applies to town officials. The recommendations are fair in that they apply to all candidates who get  
350 elected. The person elected cannot vote on an application filed by a contributor. If a candidate is not  
351 elected, it is a non-issue because the person would not be in a position to vote on the application.  
352

353 Mrs. Preiser said that she could envision ethical issues coming up during the campaign itself.  
354

355 Harriet Leib said the campaign oversight committee would be an established board that could handle  
356 those types of campaign-related issues. It does not help to get that detailed. A broader picture is  
357 needed. The commission needs to establish broad guidelines. Trying to define all the details will kill  
358 the proposal.  
359

360 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that she does not believe the other members of the board agree with  
361 Harriet Leib's last statement. Ms. Lederer-Plaskett said that she wants to include as much detail as  
362 possible in the recommendations, not just give generalized headlines. She is concerned the Town  
363 Board will endorse the headlines, but develop details that do not further the commission's goals toward  
364 campaign fairness. The public will be misled into thinking whatever the Town Board later develops  
365 is an outgrowth of the commission's work, because the Town Board will say they acted on the  
366 commission's generalized headlines.  
367

368 Harriet Leib said that the amount of detail needed is something that still needs to be worked out.  
369

370 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said there was a recognition that the Ethics Board has its limitations and,  
371 therefore, some things had to be handled by a Fair Campaign Practices Committee. The committee

372 would handle ethical issues regarding candidates. The commission was asked why candidates “buying  
373 clout” wasn’t against the law. The committee would address those issues.

374  
375 Harriet Leib suggested not referring to the oversight board as a Fair Campaign Practices Committee  
376 since there is already a committee with that name at the county level. A Campaign Oversight  
377 Commission might be a better name.

378  
379 Claire Lee asked if the town’s Campaign Oversight Commission would duplicate any of the functions  
380 of the county’s Fair Campaign Practices Committee.

381  
382 Harriet Leib said the county committee does not get involved with local issues such as cable access.

383  
384 Claire Lee asked if the county’s Fair Campaign Practices Committee would get involved with  
385 candidates meeting any voluntary contribution limits imposed as local reform.

386  
387 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said they would not.

388  
389 Harriet Leib said the county committee examines campaign statements that are contested and issues  
390 rulings regarding the truthfulness of the statements. The proposed oversight commission would not  
391 duplicate the county’s work.

392  
393 Stephanie Bellino said the League’s Fair Campaign Practices Committee has no teeth.

394  
395 Harriet Leib said that its teeth is in the publicity that it generates regarding its findings.

396  
397 Charlotte Schienberg said the press coverage gives the Fair Campaign Practices Committee its teeth.

398  
399 Ella Preiser said that the local oversight commission would likely also rely on the shame factor.  
400 However, if the press doesn’t provide coverage there is no shame factor. It is very difficult to get press  
401 coverage of local issues, particularly coverage on television or a newspaper of widespread circulation.  
402 She asked if the oversight committee would have the authority to impose any penalties or be able to  
403 file charges with the town’s Ethics Board, in addition to trying to use the “shame factor”. For the  
404 oversight commission to file charges with the Ethics Board, the Town Board would have to amend the  
405 Ethics Code to allow such filings. How does the commission envision getting the Town Board to do  
406 that?

407  
408 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that access to the Ethics Board has not been resolved. The commission  
409 purposely avoided specifics until hearing from the public. There are strong feelings by some to only  
410 let the oversight commission have access to the Ethics Board and there are just as strong feelings by  
411 others that everyone should be able to directly file charges with the Ethics Board.

412  
413 Charlotte Schienberg, in response to Mrs. Preiser’s concern regarding whether the recommendations  
414 also apply to the Town Clerk, Town Receiver, etc., said that the wording mentions elected officials,  
415 which would include the Town Clerk, Town Receiver, etc.

416  
417 Ella Preiser said that the term “elected officials” is not used consistently throughout the documents.

418  
419 Charlotte Schienberg agreed that the term should be consistently used.

420

421 Ella Preiser supplemented her written comments regarding mailings with the following: An oversight  
422 commission cannot look at every letter sent by town officials so how would it work? Regarding the  
423 "name, face, likeness" provision, twice each year the town does a town-wide mailing that includes the  
424 various town recreation and activity programs, schedules, etc. The booklet includes prominent letters  
425 from the Town Supervisor, Town Council members, Town Clerk, etc., along with a list of their  
426 accomplishments. One of the bi-annual mailings arrives the weekend before primary day. Would the  
427 names, pictures, and letters of the elected officials be removed from the publications or would the  
428 suggestion be to time the mailings differently?  
429

430 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said Mrs. Preiser has raised excellent questions, most of which still require  
431 further consideration of the details.  
432

433 Harriet Leib said that being very specific could kill what the commission is trying to accomplish,  
434 particularly attempts to try to define things. Definitions can be torn apart, word by word.  
435 Generalizations with some specifics should be the goal.  
436

437 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the amount of detail still needs to be addressed.  
438

439 Ella Preiser said that all she is asking is that her questions be considered. For example, debates are  
440 nice but, if the League of Women Voters and the Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations do not  
441 commit to them, the requirement for candidates to participate in debates is meaningless.  
442

443 Harriet Leib said she spoke to the League of Women Voters' County Chair who said it is  
444 administratively impossible for the League to do primaries. The League's focus at the time of the  
445 primary and before is to get ready general election related activities.  
446

447 Claire Lee said that she is convinced that the Primary Elections in Greenburgh are extremely important  
448 and need to be considered by the League.  
449

450 Anne Nelson responded to the empty chair debate issue raised by Mrs. Preiser. She said the League's  
451 local chair decides how to handle empty chair debates and may allow the candidate who shows up to  
452 make a short statement.  
453

454 Claire Lee said that a candidate stating that his/her opponent refused to show up to debate is a very  
455 strong statement. A candidate who cannot debate because his/her opponent failed to show up should  
456 be permitted a few minutes to make such a statement.  
457

458 Ella Preiser said the Council of Greenburgh Civic Associations followed the League of Women Voters  
459 debate guidelines exactly and did not allow anyone without an opponent to participate in the debate.  
460

461 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the commission needs to obtain a copy of the FCC regulations that  
462 prohibit empty chair debates.  
463

464 David Gottlieb asked what impact cable television has on local elections.  
465

466 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that it is difficult to measure the impact of cable access television on  
467 local elections. However, Greenburgh elected officials must perceive cable access as having a  
468 significant impact. She gave Mr. Gottlieb a packet of papers regarding cable access and the Antenna  
469 Review Board. The Supervisor said the Antenna Review Board could not televise its meeting. When  
470 the Antenna Review Board tried to televise its meeting, all of a sudden there was no sound going out.

471 It made it very clear that the Supervisor did not want the Antenna Board meeting to be shown on cable  
472 television. George Malone, the cable director, investigated and could not find anything wrong with the  
473 town's cable system. Cablevision was contacted and Cablevision technicians determined that  
474 everything was working on its end. Cablevision then sent a technician to Town Hall to investigate.  
475 The Cablevision technician eventually found that a wire had been disconnected from the jack it was  
476 supposed to be in and reconnected into another jack somewhere else. If the wire had dislodged itself, it  
477 would have been hanging and easy to find and fix. It wasn't. The wire was plugged in, making it look  
478 like it was supposed to be there. It was Cablevision's discovery. It is clear to her that the Antenna  
479 Review Board was not supposed to be televised. The Antenna Board met for one and one-half hours  
480 on camera but without sound. It supports much of what was said. There is a great fear of the power of  
481 cable access programs. It also shows the power of the incumbency to control information.

482  
483 Harriet Leib said that the commission members need to keep focused within our minds on the scope of  
484 the commission.

485  
486 William Pohlmann asked if he could comment on that point.

487  
488 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said he could.

489  
490 Mr. Pohlmann said that the commission's title is "Campaign Finance", yet the commission has already  
491 decided that there will not be financing of campaigns in Greenburgh. He agrees with that decision.  
492 The alternative, therefore, is for the commission to try to gain a greater measure of candidate access to  
493 the public because the main purpose of the commission is fairness, which requires an informed public.  
494 He advocates around-the-clock airing of candidate-related programs the weekend prior to the election  
495 because if the TV show Survivor happens to be on the same night as the debate, no one will see the  
496 debate live.

497  
498 Mr. Pohlmann said he agrees with many of the commission's recommendations but disagrees with  
499 several. He disagrees with the recusal recommendation because taking the campaign contributions  
500 from developers is against the law. It should not be permitted at all. Also, the team member who gets  
501 the contribution will recuse him/herself from voting but not the other candidates running as a team.  
502 The contributor will still get the application approved. It should not be a pledge. It should be against  
503 the law. The commission has yet to address the composition of the Ethics Board. It needs to include  
504 members who have a "natural tension" to the incumbent office holder. The Ethics Board needs to be  
505 changed so that party leaders from the three most major parties, not including the party of the then  
506 Supervisor, can appoint one member each. The Town Board should be able to appoint a member, as  
507 well as should the League of Women Voters.

508  
509 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked Mr. Pohlmann to limit his comments to those not made at the public  
510 hearing. The comments that Ella Preiser and Stephanie Bellino made were not previously made.

511  
512 William Pohlmann said he had one more comment. It is very difficult to find a campaign treasurer.  
513 No one wants the job. The commission should not make a volunteer treasurer's work any harder than  
514 it is already.

515  
516 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett thanked Mr. Pohlmann for his comments.

517  
518 Mr. Gottlieb asked how Larchmont/Mamaroneck evolved having such a "blissful state" of cable access  
519 television.

520

521 Claire Lee said that civic groups formed a non-profit organization to deal with cable issues as soon as a  
522 cable company announced plans to come into the municipality. The municipality gave the non-profit  
523 group total control of cable access. They never took control of cable or the franchise fees, as in  
524 Greenburgh.

525  
526 Mr. Gottlieb asked if Larchmont/Mamaroneck had a legal basis for allowing the non-profit group to  
527 independently control cable.

528  
529 Claire Lee said that Francis Sheehan has conducted a significant amount of research regarding cable  
530 access control and has found that many, many municipalities have a non-profit group independently  
531 control and operate cable access television. He was able to download and give her a lot of information  
532 from the Internet.

533  
534 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett suggested that this would be a good place to develop a calendar. One of the  
535 policies in the Town of Greenburgh, which was implemented at the urging of the residents, is that  
536 nothing controversial be presented during the summer months. She strongly suggests not presenting  
537 any findings to the Town Board during the summer since no one from the public will be around to hear  
538 it. In addition, commission members will be going away for vacation and it will be difficult to hold  
539 meetings. It is not realistic to expect to draft recommendations in the detail needed by the end of June.  
540 Anne Nelson has proposed an interim report.

541  
542 Lester Steinman said the commission, at some point, has to stop obtaining additional input from the  
543 public and start meeting to act on what was heard. There has been ample opportunity for the public to  
544 comment at this point. The commission now needs to break into its subcommittees to develop  
545 questions for the full commission to consider. Each question should then be put to the full commission  
546 for a vote. There is still a long way for the commission to go.

547  
548 Claire Lee said the commission members have been talking to each other for months and few others  
549 know what the commission has been doing. She has found the entire process very enlightening and the  
550 information so educational that she even thought of writing to the newspapers about it. She didn't  
551 write because the information should come from the commission.

552  
553 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said it was very valuable to hear from the public at the public hearing and  
554 receive the additional comments earlier in the meeting. The commission can now focus on the answers  
555 to the questions presented to the commission. She asked what other commission members think of  
556 Lester Steinman's comments.

557  
558 Claire Lee said she agrees with them.

559  
560 Mary Tobias said Supervisor Feiner stated at the first commission meeting that he wanted something  
561 from the commission by June so a November referendum could be placed on the ballot. She asked  
562 how the commission intended to address Mr. Feiner's request.

563  
564 Harriet Leib said that when Supervisor Feiner asked the League of Women Voters to get involved, the  
565 League was aware of Mr. Feiner's desire for a referendum. However, the League made it clear to Mr.  
566 Feiner that the commission, should the League agree to get involved, would be independent and might  
567 go in a different direction at its own pace and its own schedule. It cannot be denied that he started the  
568 commission. He had his own ideas in mind. The League told him they would not be involved unless  
569 the independence of the commission was assured. Supervisor Feiner agreed to the League's terms.

570 She had hoped that the commission would have completed its work by June, but obviously that is not  
571 the case.

572

573 Mary Tobias asked if Supervisor Feiner had inquired as to how the commission was progressing  
574 toward completing its work.

575

576 Harriet Leib said that he had not.

577

578 Anne Nelson said that the commission has to respond in some manner to Mr. Feiner, as a matter of  
579 courtesy, by the end of June. It would be a slap in the face not to respond. There is disagreement  
580 about many specific things-- ethics, cable access, etc.; however, the commission should let Mr. Feiner  
581 know that the commission is working on these issues. The commission should spell out the objectives  
582 of the subcommittees. If the timeframe cannot be met then the report should say so. Mr. Feiner needs  
583 to be told what is going on.

584

585 Charlotte Schienberg asked if the commission's report should go out as a press release.

586

587 Anne Nelson said that she knows the importance of press releases. The commission needs to respond,  
588 one way or the other.

589

590 Charlotte Schienberg said that a report could be issued as a courtesy, perhaps as a press release. It  
591 would not be an interim report, but, instead, a progress report.

592

593 Anne Nelson said that it could be a report regarding what the commission has done, what it is working  
594 on and what are the areas of concern being addressed.

595

596 Harriet Leib said that the Town Board is not without information. Susan Mancuso is on the  
597 commission as a representative of the Town Board and she does go back and speak to the Town Board.  
598 She suggested the commission not thwart its progress by stopping to write an interim report that would  
599 raise questions and debate over its wording and content, time that could be spent completing  
600 subcommittee work. A letter could go to the Town Board summarizing the number of meetings held,  
601 the recommendations under consideration, and the need for additional meetings.

602

603 Charlotte Schienberg said that her concern is that any report sent directly to the Town Board at this  
604 time could be considered by the Town Board as a final report that could then be sent to the public as  
605 final. The commission is independent and that is the role the commission should maintain. A courtesy  
606 report is fine but it must be clear that it is not the final report.

607

608 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the report could be clearly marked that it is a work in progress.

609

610 Harriet Leib said that Anne Nelson's point regarding a courtesy response to the Town Board is well  
611 taken. Something should be sent.

612

613 Erin Malloy said the report should be simple and to the point.

614

615 Anne Nelson said that the issues raised by the Supervisor should be addressed, such as Mr. Feiner's  
616 desire to have a voters' guide of local issues.

617

618 Lester Steinman said that the voters' guide was discussed and there was no support for it.

619

620 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that the voters' guide suggestion was discussed and rejected.  
621 Residents already receive too much mail. Another voters' guide is not needed.

622  
623 Anne Nelson said the questions in the local voters' guide asked of candidates could be directed to  
624 specific issues important to Greenburgh residents, questions that are not asked in the League's voters'  
625 guide.

626  
627 Francis Sheehan said that one of the concerns raised regarding the local voters' guide is that someone  
628 or some group would have to decide which questions are important local questions and which are not.  
629 Question selection could be very controversial and politically motivated.

630  
631 Anne Nelson said that Mr. Feiner is willing to put up the money for the voters' guide.

632  
633 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that he is willing to put up our money.

634  
635 Harriet Leib said that a letter needs to be drafted that can be sent to the Town Board.

636  
637 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said she would draft a letter and distribute it to the commission members to  
638 review prior to actually sending it.

639  
640 Lester Steinman said that the letter should just state facts and have as attachments the materials that  
641 were available at the public hearing, and the minutes. The letter should state that additional time is  
642 needed to complete the commission's work.

643  
644 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked for a vote on whether a letter as described by Lester Steinman should  
645 be sent to the Town Board and the press.

646  
647 Lester Steinman said the letter should reflect where the commission is in the process.

648  
649 Charlotte Schienberg suggested that each subcommittee revamp the prior recommendations, taking  
650 into consideration the comments heard at the public hearing.

651  
652 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked Charlotte Schienberg to hold off on her suggestion until the current  
653 issue is decided.

654  
655 Erin Malloy asked if the commission was going to recommend a referendum.

656  
657 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said no, the commission agreed to develop recommendations regarding  
658 needed changes and let the Town Board decide how best to finance those changes if financing is  
659 needed. She said Lester Steinman stated the position of the commission clearly at the public hearing.  
660 The Town Board needs to decide how to pay for any financing needed.

661  
662 Lester Steinman said that, before anyone can determine if a referendum is possible, what needs to be  
663 funded must be known. The commission is not in a position at the present time to make those  
664 determinations.

665  
666 Francis Sheehan said that, even if reform initiatives cost money, the commission is not in a position to  
667 state that a referendum is appropriate.

668

669 Lester Steinman said the commission might be able to make a statement that a referendum is an option,  
670 if legal, emphasizing the term "if legal". Even if it were, however, the town's bond counsel would be  
671 the person to decide if there should be a referendum, not this commission.  
672

673 Mary Tobias said that the proposed letter to the Town Board will imply that there will not be a  
674 referendum this year on local campaign finance reform because the recommendations will not be to the  
675 Town Board by June.  
676

677  
678 Charlotte Schienberg suggested not mentioning the referendum in the letter.  
679

680 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that the Town Board could still make campaign finance reform a  
681 referendum issue next year if a referendum is the town's goal.  
682

683 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett asked for a show of hands for sending a letter similar to the one described  
684 by Lester Steinman. All approved.  
685

686 Charlotte Schienberg suggested that subcommittees revamp the recommendations and respond to  
687 public comments in the form of consolidated questions and answers.  
688

689 Claire Lee said that the cable subcommittee may not want to revamp the recommendations.  
690

691 Lester Steinman said that the cable subcommittee has had more consensus on the issues than other  
692 subcommittees.  
693

694 Claire Lee said that detailed questions and answers may get members lost in the details.  
695

696 Harriet Leib asked if the commission should include the type of specificity in the final report that was  
697 requested at the public hearing.  
698

699 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said the recommendations were purposely not made specific to elicit  
700 discussion at the public hearing. The specificity is less than what some commissioners might like in  
701 the actual report.  
702

703 Charlotte Schienberg asked if the commission intended to indicate what the community perceptions are  
704 or were, now and what was addressed, and what was addressed. It would be in three parts.  
705

706 Harriet Leib said there is a fourth part. Many at the hearing were concerned that the recommendations  
707 would be buried after being presented.  
708

709 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that even if there is too much detail, it is important to respond to the  
710 comments raised by the public.  
711

712 Lester Steinman said some of what the commission heard at the public hearing may be made part of  
713 forwarded recommendations.  
714

715 Erin Malloy asked if the commission is supposed to list the comments heard at the public hearing and  
716 then respond with recommendations to address those comments? That may be a lot to do.  
717

718 Claire Lee said that the oversight committee issue has never been fully addressed. If someone were to  
719 ask the commission about the oversight committee what would be the answer?

720

721 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said each subcommittee has to define what the role of the oversight  
722 committee should be.

723

724 Claire Lee said that one of her questions is, who? Who is on the oversight committee?

725

726 Harriet Leib said that is a big question.

727

728 Erin Malloy said that if the commission uses Lester Steinman's suggestion regarding closing the public  
729 comment period and beginning developing responses, the commission will need to meet at least one or  
730 two more times.

731

732 Harriet Leib said the letter to the Town Board needs to be sent by the end of June, before June 30.

733

734 Charlotte Schienberg asked how should the letter be addressed, to the Supervisor as well as the Town  
735 Board?

736

737 Harriet Leib said the letter should also be addressed to Anne Nelson and the League President.

738

739 Harriet Leib said that a timetable needs to be established. Subcommittees need to meet and then the  
740 commission needs to meet.

741

742 Catherine Lederer-Plaskett said that the reality is that many members will be on vacation and  
743 scheduling meetings during the summer will become difficult.

744

745 Mary Tobias said that she was planning on going away.

746

747 Claire Lee said that she would be away as well.

748

749 Charlotte Schienberg said the subcommittee members should get together to work out a meeting date.

750

751 Harriet Leib said that the timetable should be developed in reverse. She asked when the full  
752 commission should next meet.

753

754 Lester Steinman said that September is the closest realistic meeting time.

755

756 Harriet Leib suggested the middle of September to avoid the holidays. There was agreement that the  
757 next full commission meeting should be September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at 6:00 p.m. at Rochambeau.

758

759 Harriet Leib discussed with Ethics Subcommittee members a possible meeting date. July 6, 2000, at  
760 12:30 p.m. at Lester Steinman's office was selected.

761

762 The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

763

764 Respectfully submitted,

765 Francis Sheehan, Commission Secretary