For the fourth year in a row the Town of Cortlandt’s Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) has distributed reusable shopping bags at supermarkets in the town and Village of Croton-on-Hudson. Normally conducted in advance of Earth Day, this year’s giveaway at the ShopRite on Route 6 (Cortlandt Boulevard) was held Friday morning, March 1, the first day of the state-wide ban on single-use plastic bags. Shoppers were eager to receive them. Above, Cortlandt Supervisor Linda Puglisi (second from left), pictured with, from left, CAC members Amy Siniscalchi, Anthony Carbone and Paul Buckout, exhibits the last one of the 1,250 distributed in just 25 minutes. The town provided the volunteer CAC members with $2,150 to purchase the bags.

NRC knew its analysis for gas pipeline at Indian Point was faulty

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has issued a report highly critical of the agency’s review which led to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) giving the green light for the construction of an underground 42-inch diameter natural gas pipeline on the grounds of the Indian Point Energy Center in Buchanan.

FERC’s approval, given five years ago this month for what was known as the Algonquin Incremental Market Project (AIM), resulted in the construction of the pipeline, which was completed in late 2016. AIM was put into service in January 2017.

The OIG’s 36-page report, dated February 13, followed a complaint from an unnamed private citizen that the NRC misled FERC and the public by claiming to FERC that there was no additional risk associated with the proposed 42-inch pipeline, thereby “putting 30 million people at risk” in the event of an accidental or intentional breach, such as could be caused by terrorist activity; that the NRC was aware of material false statements made by Entergy, owner/operator of the Indian Point Energy Center (IPEC) to the NRC; that the NRC violated its procedures and regulations when analyzing the potential safety impacts; and, therefore, the NRC is allowing IPEC to operate “in an unapproved condition.”

The OIG’s inquiry examined the NRC’s inspection report and underlying analysis used to determine that Entergy appropriately concluded the 42-inch gas pipeline would not introduce significant risk to safety-related systems, structures, and components; and that systems, structures, and components important-to-safety (at Indian Point).

Public disclosure of the report last week did not just draw the ire of various local, county and state officials. It resulted in many calling for a public airing of the findings and questioning if the NRC is competent to determine if Holtec International is qualified to undertake the decommissioning (dismantling) of Indian Point next year after its second of two operating nuclear reactors is shut down, as scheduled, in April 2021. The first reactor is slated to permanently shut down next month.

“The OIG findings show outrageous failings by an agency charged with the important responsibility of protecting the health

Croton approves zoning amendments intended to encourage new housing

Croton-on-Hudson’s Board of Trustees Monday night approved controversial zoning changes for the so-called “ Municipal Place Gateway” and “North Riverside Neighborhood” sections of the village.

The votes, 4-0-1, with Trustee Sherry Horowitz in dissent, came after opponents, in an apparent attempt to derail the changes, filed petitions at the Stanley H. Kellerhouse Municipal Building which, if upheld, would have required “supermajority” votes of the board for adoption.

As it turned out, the board majority had the votes—with Trustee Andy Simmons, who apparently was viewed as a swing vote on the Gateway changes, siding with fellow trustees Ann Gallilei and John Habib and Mayor Brian Pugh. Mr. Simmons said that he would favor the approval for the Gateway changes were there to be a vote on the number of existing housing units able to be built on the 2.3-acre, village-owned “ Kaplan property,” which village officials have been interested in selling for many years.

The zoning changes relating to the Kaplan property would allow 40 or more units. Trustee Simmons, in talking privately with Mayor Pugh, reportedly said he could support 33 units. Mayor Pugh said Monday night that he would concur with a limit of 33 units on an expected forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking development proposals for the heavily-wooded, vacant property, located off the northwest corner of Maple Street (Route 129) and Municipal Place.

While there is no legal requirement in Monday’s action to limit the number of units to 33, it is, in effect, all the board’s eventual decision whether or not to sell the property, noted the mayor.

Opponents to changes in the Gateway district—which runs roughly one block, from the Croton Commons shopping center north to just past Croton Auto Park—have chiefly objected to proposed revisions, initially outlined last fall, that would permit 40 or more units on the Kaplan property (80, if structured parking were required) in one or more buildings up to three stories in height.

Many also say that at this major entrance to the village, Croton should keep the property vacant for aesthetic purposes and not add to traffic at the heavily-traveled intersection of Maple and Municipal.

Reducing the amount of maximum ground coverage by buildings—as was included in the approved changes—will increase the amount of open space on the property, according to supporters of the changes.

It has been stressed by the board majority, village counsel Linda Whitehead and the board’s independent planning consultant, BFJ Planning, that while the revisions for the Gateway and the northerly adjacent North Riverside Neighborhood—extending as far north as Prospect Avenue—would allow building up to three stories in height, the maximum permitted height would not be greater than 35 feet. That has been the maximum building height in the Village Code for decades.

But many residents have expressed concern that by allowing a full three stories, versus two or 2-1/2, some properties will become more marketable—like Katz—and “taller” development, or redevelopment, may come sooner than later.

So far, taller development would reportedly only affect the “viewsheds” of a couple of residents on Tower Bank Street.

“Your decision will totally obliterate my view” of the Hudson River and beyond, one of those homeowners, Catherine Reiner, told the Board of Trustees Monday night. “I need my property to retain its value.”

With on-street parking along North Riverside and side-streets at a premium, opponents to the changes say there is no room for more residential units—a major thrust of the revisions.

But village counsel Ms. Whitehead said that with a major reduction in property coverage by buildings being part of the revisions, new development will bring it off-street parking that currently doesn’t
Letters

To the editor:

A multi-generational audience of 200 people was treated to an enthralling lecture on the effects of climate change by Dr. Harmon High School's auditorium on Saturday.

This was the historic launch of Croton's visionary climate stability organization, dedicated to systematically and purposefully reduce greenhouse emissions in Zip Code 10520 by 2% a year for the next 20 years in order to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The Croton household emits 52,000 tons of greenhouse gases annually. As was explained in a keynote by Tom Durrett, "The Hottest of the Hot" - transportation, heating and electricity - account for three-quarters of all of which are available on the website croton100.org.

Sincerely,
Adin Hadad, Events Committee Chair, Croton100

To the editor:

Thank you for the Croton-on-Hudson. I have lived in the village for my entire life. My wife and I want to raise our future family here.

Historically, our village has been a multi-generational community that's put a great deal of effort into preserving and upholding our class families. That's less and less true.

As residents, we must take the lead and make Croton a great place to live.

Governors are interested in the idea of a "step-down" process in which they must achieve certain benchmarks and reduce our carbon footprint over the next 20 years.

Some 560 current residents of our village are spending over half their income on housing costs. Rental vacancy rates hover around 1%.

In June 2020, the village had expected that between the ages of 45-64, 45% of all households were not making enough money to live comfortably. The share of the population over 75 by over 12% in the past five years, and rent, interest, and inflation, increased by almost 20% between 2000-2017.

With a limited budget, we are unable to provide adequate housing for our residents or to maintain our community's infrastructure.

Croton has always been proud of the fact that we have been a self-sufficient community. There's clearly more we can do to become a welcoming place when it comes to housing.

National population growth is slowing down, and Croton's artificially constrained housing supply is pushing young families and young people out of our community.

Creating new housing options is a key means to our Community Health Competition, adopted unanimously and on a bi-partisan basis by the Board of Trustees.

The plan: "Adapting housing, transit, recreation and buildings public housing to provide vibrant and accessible senior population to secure age in place and maintain a vibrant community."

At the same time, the Village must meet its property services and quality of life that will attract and retain young professionals and younger workforce needed to replace the aging residents who are shrinking as the population ages.

At the three public hearings and the two workshops the Board of Trustees has held on this topic, residents have expressed concerns about traffic, housing, and the schools and quality of life. These are legitimate concerns.

The evidence we’ve seen shows that the local laws rezoning North and North River Road, and North River Road in general, will not override the current zoning law (which is the local law), and will not provide a meaningful or meaningful change in the current zoning law (especially in the context of roadways that carry thousands of drivers a day).

Thus, under the new, form of coding, the newly adopted local laws have important impacts on the protection of quality of life of residents. Local Law 9, which rezones the Municipal Place (Broadway) in the Kaatsbaan locality, requires 50-foot vegetated setbacks from Broadway and between 100 feet and an avenue of 10,000 square feet of parks and open space. Local Law 10 rezoning North River Road reduces the number of residential units from 450 to 360 of development. The number of parcels and establishes marking requirements for the buildings. The new zoning law changes the 35-foot, wide-block height limit.

Reasoning to allow for more housing that meets the Croton standards, as under Local Law 9, moves to the right direction is the most important step.

Now, with these local laws and the lack of laws, we use the Request for Proposals process to work with the Planning Board to make sure that all proposals and all proposals are as much as possible to accommodate our community standards and Harmon rezoning has been.

Brian Fung, Mayor

Crosstown of Croton-on-Hudson

Crosstown of Croton-on-Hudson, New York

Town of Cortlandt and the Croton Coalition

Crosstown of Croton-on-Hudson

To the editor:

At its Monday night meeting, Croton's Board of Trustees approved the local rezoning amendments applicable to key village areas. The decision expressed a large number of people.

The individuals who should be most upset are residential/commercial renters because they can be made millions from the changes. Real estate moguls will be furious that these modest alterations are not enough to make millions of profit deriving from speculative speculation. The local developers will be furious that Croton will receive zero proposals from capital construction carousels who will walk in the streets to find nothing in Croton. "Good ridance."

The voices insisting that the board adopt a "No New Housing Ever" policy were respectfully acknowledged, but it was not a strategy that showed our decades-long failure to incentivize the completion of tastefully designed, micro-in their high-density living environments. Croton's elected leaders must immediately work to support the progress of such initiatives, which in 2020 and beyond include: 1) improving government services; 2) improving housing standards; and 3) enabling small-scale residential expansion to increase our housing stock while gently rehabilitating declining areas. These principles have not positive impacts that would win majority support in any public survey — if it was properly conducted.

Those who should be pleased with the opposite are the many Croton residents who are living in the beautiful town, and Croton's zoning changes creating traffic problems, and the environment, or negatively impacting our quality of life.

The board's vote in favor of the two amendments is consistent with this wise policy. The Request for Proposals process will be drafted for the "Katz property," and we will move on to more development restrictions that were included in the Croton zoning amendment.

In addition, the RFP will be the subject of an independently chaired committee dedicated to the village's community voices.

River Ridge corridor planning, the Planning Board's review of new proposals received for the development of the Village is considered a key factor in the decision. In the short term, the desire for community voices which can have more substantial changes that benefit Croton's population.

John L. Habib, Trustee, Village of Croton-on-Hudson

Crossover Yoga Project fund-raiser Sunday

Crossover Yoga Project fund-raiser Sunday

Crossover Yoga Project (CYP) will host its second annual fund-raiser on March 8th, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Stage 48, 513 South Broadway, Yonkers.

The fund-raiser aims to support the expansion of five-year-old, non-profit CYP, an organization that offers free yoga classes to inner-city girls through yoga, art, and mindfulness to continued on page 9

County: affordable homes, condo available, first-time, first-served

Westchester County is offering several single-family homes in the area and a senior condominium for sale at prices ranging from $164,000 for a condo to $600,000 for a home.

Potential homebuyers quality, and homes will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

Potential homebuyers may apply, in the form of a press release from the county, was issued. The release was brief and lacked various details, including the cost and street addresses of the single-family homes.

Located in the Village of Chappaqua near by the Hendrick Hudson school district, the four homes offer three and four bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, and finished or unfinished basements in a neighborhood setting.

In addition, Cortlandt Manor offers community membership in its "Croton Park Colony, complete with a community center, gym, pool and tennis courts, and a marina." The two bedroom condominium, in Jefferson Street, Yonkers, has two bedrooms and two bathrooms, with an island, storage, laundry and garage parking. The condominium community which boasts a wide range of amenities such as a gym, fitness center, outdoor swimming pool and picnic area.

With a 5% down payment for the condo, a buyer’s monthly housing expenses (including taxes, insurance and mortgage charges) would be approximately $1,600.

For the single-family properties, monthly mortgage payments could range from $1,800 to $2,045. Maximum household income limits for a two-person household, $77,000; three-person $86,600; four persons, $96,250; and five persons, $105,900.

In the release, County Executive George Latimer encouraged interested families to apply. "Our affordable homeownership program enables families of modest means to purchase housing in the high-priced market. For some, purchase will lower their monthly housing expenses. Why rent when you could own?"

Stated Housing Action Council Executive Director Rose Napolitano, the number of individuals trying to buy. The county has stepped up its efforts to purchase existing homes at market rates, but we are really short on funds. The prices are unaffordable. Some people need to have this limited opportunity to buy.

For information and applications, go to https://homes.westchestergov.org. The Housing Action Council, a non-profit organization that helps qualifying applicants and assisting them through the home buying process, at 332-6144 or hac@affordhousing.org.

Correction

Westchester County’s Fair & Affordable Housing Coalition held a meeting at the Croton on Hudson YMCA, 195 Central Avenue (at the Bronx River Parkway), White Plains.

The date of the annual event is intended to help prospective first-time homebuyers and renters.

The date on page 2 in last week’s issue was incorrect. We regret the error and confusion it