

# The Gazette

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Week of March 5 through 11, 2020

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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 give-away at the ShopRite on Route 6 (Cortlandt Boulevard) was held Sunday 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 Buck-out, 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.



At Saturday morning's kick-off of Croton100's new app--hoped to encourage residents of Croton-on-Hudson to decrease their carbon footprint at least five percent a year--village resident Lisa Morsberger suited up to portray the organization's new mascot, a green 'Decarbonizer Bunny.' (See page 2, 'Letters,' first entry.) Photo: Andrew Courtney

## 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-to-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 Gallelli 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 cap on the number of 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, after 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 of 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 2.5, 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 lower Bank Street.

"Your decision will totally obliterate my view" of the Hudson River and beyond, one of those homeowners, Catherine Reiter, 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 with it off-street parking that currently doesn't

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## 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 that 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 and energized 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 20 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 unanalyzed 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 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

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04/09/20  
EDWARD HADDAD  
LISA HASTINGS  
CROTON HUDSON NY 10520-2920  
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Where you are

# Letters

To the editor:

A multi-generational audience of 200 people was treated to an enthusiastic launch celebration of Croton100 at Croton-Harmon High School's auditorium on Saturday.

This was a historic launch of Croton's visionary climate stability organization whose goal is to systematically reduce greenhouse emissions in Zip Code 10520 by 5% a year for the next 20 years in keeping with United Nations' decarbonization goals.

The average Croton household emits 52.6 tons of greenhouse gases annually. As was explained in a keynote by Dr. Chandu Visweswariah, the "heavy hitters" are transportation, heating and electricity. However, day-to-day choices we make for food, waste and goods and services add to our total carbon footprint.

A "Zip Code overhead" for public services and spaces rounds out our total carbon impact. Dr. Visweswariah stressed that decarbonization is vital and explained how a "step-down" process in each of these themes can be deployed systematically to reduce our carbon footprints. Each step down the carbon ladder will save money, improve health and reduce emissions.

At the launch, a software application called "Carbon Tracker" was announced which will help everyone in Croton who wants to quantify their baseline carbon footprint and track progress towards net-zero by 2040. Croton100 invites all residents to use the Carbon Tracker on our website to determine their own household contributions to Croton's carbon emissions.

A dozen Croton residents were honored for being "decarbonizers," collectively saving or pledging to save 100 tons of greenhouse gases annually. Varied actions include improved insulation, installation of solar panels and heat pumps, purchase of more efficient vehicles, diet changes and offsets of airline flights. These residents were the first to meet and greet a green "Decarbonizer Bunny," the official mascot of Croton100 that was unveiled at the event.

Guest speakers included Mayor Brian Pugh, County Executive George Latimer, state Assemblywoman Sandy Galef and Donovan Gordon, Director of Sustainable Heating and Cooling at NYSEDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) and local youth speakers.

"We have to do more," said Executive Latimer.

Mr. Gordon stressed that environmental progress can only be successful with engagement at the community level and expressed a desire to replicate the success of Croton100 state-wide. Several "Friends" and "Partners" of Croton100 attended the event, including representation from other towns and villages.

Attendees also engaged with experts from Sustainable Westchester about specific decarbonizing steps they can take and learned about some cost-effective programs in home heating, transportation, waste management and renewable-sourced electricity. They were also treated to reusable bag giveaways and plastic reduction guidance by Croton resident-owned business Eco-Bags Products and had an opportunity to see electric vehicles on display and chat with their owners.

Attendees left with a renewed sense of purpose to decarbonize their lives with the help of awareness, knowledge and a carbon tracking app from Croton100, all of which are available on the website croton100.org.

Sincerely,  
**Adlin Hadad, Events Committee  
Co-Chair, Croton100**

To the editor:

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

Historically, our village has been a multigenerational community that's put a great quality of life within reach of middle-class families. That's less and less true. Mitigating this trend is a key reason for the adoption of Local Laws 9 & 10 in a 4-1 vote by the Board of Trustees at the March 2 meeting of Board of Trustees.

Between 2000 and 2017, the share of the village that's between the ages of 30-44 fell by 34%. The share of the population over 75 fell by over 12% over the same period. Rent, adjusted for inflation, increased by almost 20% between 2000-2017.

Some 560 current residents of our village are spending over half their income on housing costs. Rental vacancy rates hover around 1%. We have not added a single affordable housing unit in over 10 years.

Croton has always been forward thinking and a welcoming place. There's clearly more we can do to become a welcoming place when it comes to housing. Natural population growth combined with artificially constrained housing supply is pushing senior citizens and young people out of our community.

Creating new housing options is a key element of our Comprehensive Plan, adopted unanimously and on a bi-partisan basis by the Board of Trustees in 2017.

Per the plan: "Adapting housing, transit, recreation and buildings and public spaces will help a vibrant and engaged senior population to securely age in place and contribute to a vibrant community. At the same time, the Village must provide the services and quality of life that will attract and retain the new Village immigrants and younger workforce needed to replace a labor force that is 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, impact on the schools and quality of life. Those are legitimate concerns.

However, the evidence we've seen shows that the local laws rezoning Municipal Place and North Riverside Avenue will not overburden the schools (where enrollment has been in steady decline since 2009) and will not generate meaningfully more traffic than the current commercial zoning (especially in the context of roadways that carry literally thousands of drivers a day).

Compared to the now-former code, the newly adopted local laws have important improvements for protecting quality of life of residents. Local Law 9, which rezones the Municipal Place Gateway (including the Katz property) requires 50-foot vegetated setbacks from Beekman and Wells avenues and creation of 10,000 square feet of park space. Local Law 10 rezoning North Riverside reduces the allowable density of development on a number of parcels and establishes marking requirements. Neither local law changes the 35-foot, village-wide height maximum.

Rezoning to allow for more housing that still meets our Croton standards, as under Local Laws 9 & 10, moves us in the right direction.

Now, with these local laws on the books, we will use the Request for Proposals process and work with the Planning Board to make sure any and all proposals are as much of a win for our community as the Harmon rezoning has been.

**Brian Pugh, Mayor,  
Village of Croton-on-Hudson**

To the editor:

At its Monday night meeting, Croton's Board of Trustees passed two zoning amendments applicable to key village areas. The decision infuriated a large number of

people.

The individuals who should be most upset are residential/commercial property developers who were hoping to make millions from the changes. Real estate moguls will be furious that these modest amendments indisputably block their goal of maximizing profits derived from speculative, large-scale developments. Croton will receive zero proposals from capitalist construction carpetbaggers, who will walk away without investing in Croton. "Good riddance."

The voices insisting that the board adopt a "No New Housing Ever" policy were respectfully acknowledged, but unheeded. No village official should blindly comply with such a mantra. We should not maintain a status quo that showcases our decades-long failure to incentivize the completion of tactfully designed, micro-projects in these high-profile gateway zones. Our elected leaders must instead comply with their numerous fiduciary duties, which in 2020 and beyond include: 1) improving government services; 2) stabilizing/reducing village expenses; and 3) enabling small-scale residential development to increase our depleted housing stock while gently rehabilitating declining areas. These principles have net positive impacts that would win majority support in any public survey - if it was properly drafted.

Those who should be pleased with the vote are the many Croton residents who demanded that the board never enact zoning changes creating traffic problems, damaging the environment, or negatively impacting our quality of life.

The 80% board vote in favor of the two amendments actually complies with this wise policy. The Request for Proposal document now to be drafted for the "Katz property" will contain even more development restrictions than were already included in the relevant zoning amendment. In addition, the RFP will be authored by an independently chaired committee dedicated to balancing diverse community voices.

As for Riverside corridor development, the Planning Board's future review of new proposals received for that area - if any at all - will present insurmountable obstacles for projects not designed with Croton's best interests at their core. In short, the demands of Crotonites who want carefully managed changes that benefit Croton's population as a whole were complied--and will continue to be respected in the years ahead.

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

To the editor:

The Care for Creation Ministry will have its monthly environmental program at Holy Name of Mary, Meeting Room no. 3, 114 Grand Street, Croton-on-Hudson at 3 p.m. on Sunday, March 8.

We must each reduce our carbon footprint, but how are we going to stay warm? Natural gas is no longer a preferred fuel. New gas hook ups and availability is affecting some communities in Westchester and New York City. Gas leaks are a big source of greenhouse gases.

There is another more environmentally friendly way to heat your home right now: using a heat pump powered by renewable energy from the electric grid or from your rooftop solar collectors.

Steve Lopez of Dandelion Geothermal Energy, one of seven installers in the Croton area approved by the New York Energy Research Development Authority (NYSEDA), will speak about ground-sourced heat pump systems, explaining how they work and the incentives to make them happen.

Jonathan Katz, a Professional Engineer and member of the Croton Sustainability Committee, will speak about air-to-air sourced heat pump systems such as the one used in his residence.

Collin Adkins, a past Sustainable Sunday speaker, will briefly present new NYSEDA incentives that combine heat pumps with improvements in home efficiency.

Heat pumps can provide a "Green Living" alternative to our current fossil fuel-based heating and cooling systems. Heat pumps are just becoming widely available in a large scale. When it is time to replace your current furnace or boiler this may explain which type of unit will be the one for you. Find out about how much the transition to these systems may cost. Like many things that are done in greater numbers, the later models are more reliable

and the cost is expected to drop.

Come and hear the latest ideas of community water sourced heat pumps and other innovative technologies and help us plan for our carbon free future.

Sunny days,  
**Carl Grimm, Croton-on-Hudson**

## Crossover Yoga Project fund-raiser Sunday

The Crossover Yoga Project (CYP) will host its second annual fund-raiser on International Women's Day--Sunday, March 8--from Bethany Arts Community, 40 Somerstown Road, Ossining.

The fund-raiser aims to support the expansion of five-year-old, non-profit CYP's program of empowering vulnerable girls through yoga, art and mindfulness to

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## County: 'affordable' homes, condo available, first-come, 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 \$265,000 for a four bedroom single family home.

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

The announcement, in the form of a press release from the county, was issued Wednesday, after press time, and lacked various details, including the number of and street addresses of the single-family homes.

Located in the Village of Buchanan and served by the Hendrick Hudson school district, the single-family homes offer three and four bedrooms, two baths, decks or patios, and finished or unfinished basements in a neighborhood setting. A home in Cortlandt Manor offers community membership in the Croton Park Colony, complete with a community swimming pool.

The two bedroom condominium, in Jefferson Village in northern Yorktown, has two bedrooms and two baths, a kitchen with an island, storage, laundry and garage parking. Jefferson Village is a 55-plus community which boasts a wide range of amenities including a clubhouse, fitness center, outdoor swimming pool and picnic area.

With a 5% down payment for the condo, a buyer's monthly housing expenses (mortgage, real estate taxes and common charges) would be approximately \$1,600.

For the single-family properties, monthly housing expenses range from \$1,800 to \$2,045. Maximum household income guidelines apply. For a two-person household, \$77,000; three persons, \$86,600; four persons, \$96,250; and \$103,950 for a five-person household.

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

Stated Housing Action Council Executive Director Rose Noonan, "The scarcity of affordable homes in Westchester is a daunting challenge faced by those trying to buy. The county has stepped up, purchased existing homes at market rate, and then offered them at below market prices. I urge people not to miss this limited opportunity."

For information and applications, go to <https://homes.westchestergov.com/homeseeeker-housing> or contact the Housing Action Council, a non-profit organization responsible for qualifying applicants and assisting them through the home buying process, at 332-4144 or [hac@affordablehomes.org](mailto:hac@affordablehomes.org).

## Correction...

Westchester County's Fair & Affordable Housing Expo 2020 will be held Saturday, March 14 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Westchester County Center, 198 Central Avenue (at the Bronx River Parkway), White Plains.

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 caused.

# The Gazette

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**May Tierney  
Editor**