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Politics & Government

New Paltz votes to preserve open space

by [Erin Quinn](#) / November 4, 2020 / [Comments closed](#)



Wetlands along Dug Road in New Paltz. (Photo by Lauren Thomas)

New Paltz voters came out in support of open space. At press time, 72 percent of the ballots cast voted in favor of the Community Preservation Fund 3,648-1,408. There are still more than 1,200 absentee ballots to count, but not enough to change the support of Local Law #1, which is aimed at serving as a financial mechanism to protect and preserve “water quality, working farms, wildlife habitat and natural areas.”

The referendum will require new property owners to pay a one-time 1.5 percent real-estate transfer tax towards the community’s land preservation fund with a \$245,000 exemption, the median home value in Ulster County.

Town supervisor Neil Bettez was thrilled at the unofficial numbers which had the referendum passing by over 70%. “I hope that percentage holds up when the absentee ballots are counted, but these numbers are already beyond my expectations. I think this shows how much our residents value land preservation and open space and honestly I believe that this is



the most important thing New Paltz has done in decades. It also paves the way for neighboring communities to do the same thing. It's a sustainable way of funding open space preservation without raising taxes.”

Deputy supervisor Dan Torres concurred. “The campaign leveled against our local referendum (by the New York State Association of Realtors) was the most expensive campaign against a referendum in the history of New Paltz and Ulster County. They spent \$150,000 to spread disinformation to our residents about this referendum — that’s more than the entire DA (district attorney’s) race!”

Rhett Weires, a native New Paltzian, also officially won the seat on the New Paltz Town Court handedly as he was running on the Democratic line unopposed. The local lawyer was appointed by the town to fill the vacancy left by former town justice Jonathon Katz in 2019. He has now secured the gavel for a four-year term alongside town justice James Bacon.

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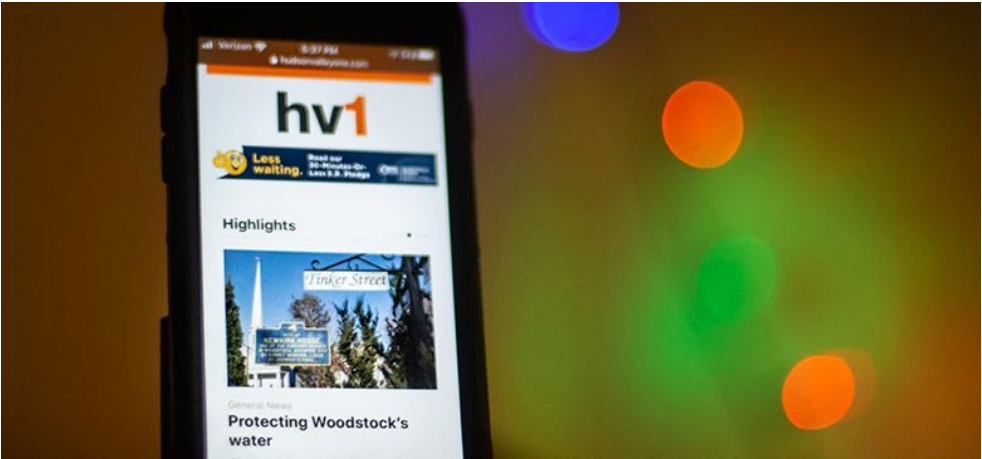
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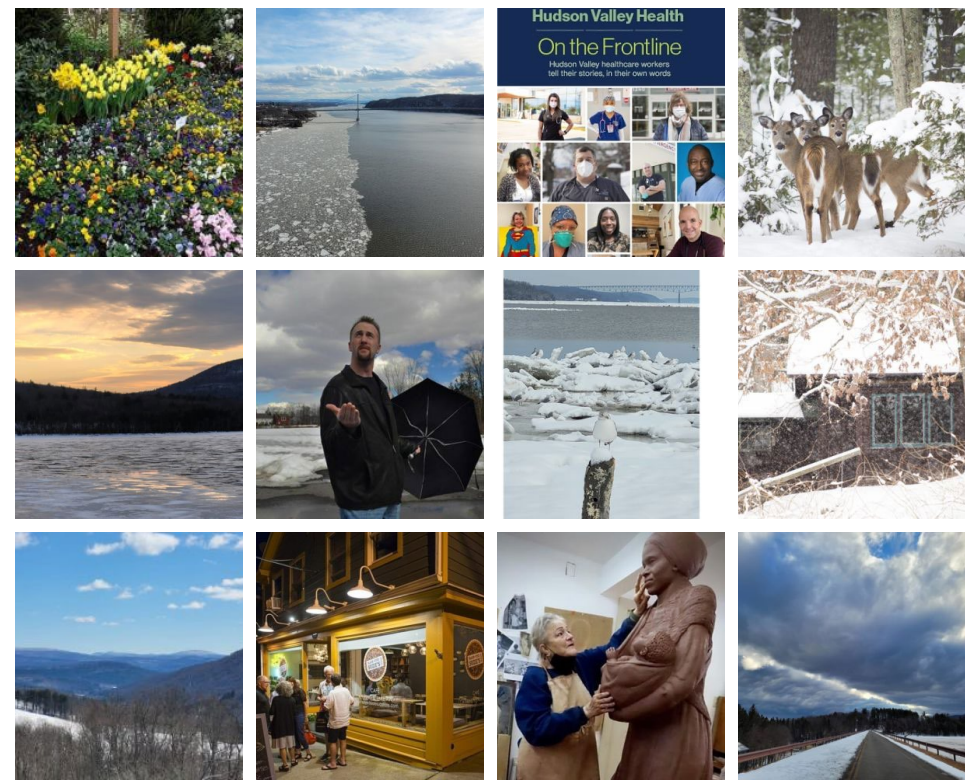
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FunkieGunkie November 8, 2020 at 8:01 am
So which open space will be protected? Mohonk, OSI, Nature Conservancy, NYSDEC, PIPC and

Walkill Valley Land Trust already own all the valuable real estate. Taxes are high because of these organizations not contributing any tax revenue to the Town and own large amounts of prime land. The Town is literally run by these organizations and the taxes are already ridiculous. Infrastructure and tourist traffic is horrible. Pollution is increasing. I'm glad I don't live in New Paltz anymore. They only pander to tourism and don't care about their taxpayers. I wouldn't move to this town for several reasons but this is just another example of featherheads running the show and greenwashing their capitalistic not for profits real estate monopolies. True conservation does not promote city people and out of state tourists to drive hours and then pay ridiculous money to be with Nature and other tourists. It's just as bad as visiting Yosemite or Yellowstone Park bit in a smaller space.

John Arbo November 9, 2020 at 4:55 pm

The Previous commentor is mistaken. Cost of community service studies consistently show that farmland and open space when it's preserved and still on the tax rolls unlike the parcels that are referenced, requires less in municipal services than housing does.

In Warwick the community preservation plan specifies that preserved parcels will remain on the tax rolls. State law is fairly detailed about these things, I don't know if it is mandated to be so, but it is common sense.

Realtors always predictably come out against such measures as they did in the town of Warwick in 2000 and in 2005, forgetting that part of what makes a location desirable is a reasonable amount of care about land-use and preservation of open space, especially in places that still have some.

FunkieGunkie November 21, 2020 at 8:06 am

Your opinions are not supported by any studies except the ones paid and executed by Land Trust organizations themselves. There are no studies by third parties. Conservation easements lower property values across the board so land can be picked up for pennies on the dollar. Just use your own brain, eyes and ears. You will see it for what it is. Self serving, money making not for profit real estate monopolies greenwashing environmentalism and patting themselves on the back everywhere they go. Nature is for sale and undreds of thousands of people driving cars from hours away is a far cry from conservation and preservation.

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