

LAKE COMMUNITIES OF PUTNAM, INC.

Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc.

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A Letter from the President

Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc. (LCP) is now in its third year. We are widely recognized and have become a model for communities throughout the Lake George Basin. LCP is continuing to focus on the original objectives set out by the founders. Following are updates with regard to the status of those objectives.

Membership: LCP now has 194 members and a goal of 225 members has been set for 2005. Help us increase our membership. Encourage your friends and neighbors to join.

Voter Registration: LCP successfully campaigned homeowners to register to vote in Putnam. Voter registration is very important, and your vote in Putnam carries more weight than almost anywhere in the USA. Consider voting in Putnam. If you have questions or need help call Charlie Gerwig or any Board Member.

Property Tax Reform: Our voice in Albany on our property tax objectives has increased ten fold by our affiliation with *Tri County Committee to Lower our Taxes*.

Site Plan Review: LCP both supported and assisted the Town Board in initiating the Site Plan Review Law. We also recognize that an additional workload has been placed on the Town Planning Board and applaud them for their implementation of this law.

Deferment of Revaluation: LCP lobbied for and fully supported the Town Board's decision to defer revaluation for the coming year.

Capping County Taxes: Again LCP stepped forward with a strong voice as you will see in following paragraphs.

Over site of Town and School Budgets: These budgets have a direct affect on your tax bill, please refer to the tax alert section below.

Land use-and water quality: The quality of life of Putnam residents is directly effected by land and water use. This committee works very hard and seldom gets headlines. We thank them.

Law enforcement: It is a difficult task to implement new laws for the betterment of the residents and even more difficult to enforce them. We have asked for better law enforcement and support the Town Board in their effort to provide this enforcement.

Property Tax Alert Elevated

Over-dependence on property taxes is a situation spiraling out of control! It is considered both unfair and inequitable by an overwhelming majority of NYS tax payers. Our property tax increases are among the highest in the nation. This causes political discontent and forces our State Representatives to consider property tax reduction initiatives that are being championed by hundreds of bi-partisan Adirondack and upstate taxpayer organizations. Short falls on the income side of the State and County budgets, along with non-funded mandates, unfair distribution of State Aid to Education, etc., have caused unconscionable burdens on the local property tax system. The State continues to legislate benefits that they won't pay for, and that taxpayers no longer can afford. Our property tax system resembles a social welfare program. We remind our elected officials the explosive growth of property values and assessments is not a reflection, I repeat, is not a reflection of a taxpayer's ability to pay. Our property taxes have reached confiscatory levels for many. That is just plain wrong!

You ask what are we doing or what have we done? We broke the problem into three categories Local, County and State. (cont'd on Page 2)

President's Letter, cont'd

Local

Putnam Central School District

LCP formed a School Study Committee, chaired by Mr. Eugene Frost, who, after extensive review provided a report with findings and recommendations, a copy of which is enclosed.

Town Budget

For three years we have attended the Budget Workshops, which are open to the public, and the presentation of the Budget by Town Supervisor, John LaPointe, to the Town Board for final review and approval. In our opinion these budgets were properly presented and left no room for additional cuts, therefore we supported them. We did lobby for and support the Town Board's decision to defer a revaluation of the town for the coming year. We request that all our members send a letter to Mr. John LaPointe and the Town Board advising of your support of this decision and request that they continue a policy of deferment on the revaluation until NYS properly addresses Aid to Education, unfunded mandates, and Medicaid. Please send a copy of your letter to the LCP at our PO Box 19, Putnam Station NY 12861. Remember luck has a peculiar habit of favoring those who don't depend on it. Write this letter now!

County Level

Increases of 20% one year, 30% the next year were unsustainable. The LCP, along with many other groups throughout the county, sent a clear message to county officials and this year there will be a 0% increase in county taxes and that's a step in the right direction. This did not come without a lot of hard work. We met with the County Board of Supervisors and questioned their expenditures. Mr. Jock Williamson, Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors and Mr. Ken Talkington, County Budget Officer, attended the annual meeting of LCP and participated in a Q & A session. We also met Mr. William McCarty, County Real Property Tax Director and Mr. Steve Peluso, Property Tax Liaison for NYS, and had a healthy discussion of the possible revaluation in Putnam. The State will pick up half of the county Family Health Plus Program cost in 2005 and the balance in 2006. As a result, we predict that the county will bring their budget under control. It starts with 0% this year. "Bravo."

New York State Level

Medicaid reform, or the "Family Health Plus Program", is just the first step. Another major area is New York State Aid to Education, which we believe is in default on its obligations, and is on notice from the Court of Appeals to correct the problem. We believe funding for education must come from NYS, not the local property tax. This is what we are lobbying for. Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward, just reelected, has taxation as her primary issue. She recognizes that NYC receives 64% of the State Aid to Education while having only 37% of the students. This needs to be reviewed. Unfunded mandates must stop. Assessments must be uniform throughout New York State. Many towns have not reassessed in 15 or 20 years.

Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc. was looking for a way to gain strength in discussions with our State Representatives. Four of our Board Members met with a group of concerned individuals, and a group called TRI COUNTY COMMITTEE TO LOWER OUR TAXES was formed. Please visit them at www.lowerourtaxes.us. This group has been effective and brings together representatives from nine towns over three counties with a common cause - property tax reform in the North Country.

Gull Bay members take note. There is a freshly painted double yellow line down the center of Gull Bay Road. Dredging of the boat launch area is close, and should be completed by spring of 2005. In Glenburnie, the beaver dam project is a go. The Black Point sewer project is now law, after a public hearing and a positive vote by the Town Board. The Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc. now has a web site thanks to Cee Rudt., www.lakecommputnam.org. This site will be used to keep you posted on numerous activities in the town, including the minutes of the town board meetings. There is a web site for Putnam Central School, www.putnames.neric.org where you can find minutes of school board meetings. Keep warm and healthy. We look forward to seeing you in the spring.

LAND USE COMMITTEE

Many agencies and organizations are involved in the protection and use of the lake and surrounding land. We all have occasion to contact or deal with some of them, from paying for our annual dock permits, obtaining approvals and permits for construction, subdivisions and docks, to testing and maintaining lake water quality and monitoring and participating in land use development planning. A quick summary of who they are and what they do follows. Most of these organizations have publications, web sites and staff to provide additional information.

Government Organizations

STATE AGENCIES

LGPC (Lake George Park Commission) The LGPC is granted authority by the legislature “to preserve, protect and enhance the resources of the Park and the natural scenic beauty of Lake George and its surrounding environs.” The LGPC has regulatory and enforcement powers relating to activities on the lake and along the shoreline. Commissioners, including the chairman, are all from the Lake George Basin. Specifically, the Commission regulates and issues permits for docks, wharfs, moorings and marinas; establishes special navigational rules and aids; operates the marine patrol; regulates storm water management and issues storm water management permits for construction projects in those towns (including Putnam) which do not have a local regulatory program. The Commission manages the milfoil program, which presently consists of various mechanical means of control. It was the lead agency in the application to the APA to test the use of the chemical Sonar for the control of milfoil, which application was turned down.

APA (Adirondack Park Agency) The APA was created by the legislature in 1971 to develop land use plans for both public and private lands within the Park. Among the resulting restrictions on building and subdivisions that directly effect shoreline land use are lot width, lot size, setback and cutting and clearing. Restrictions vary by land use type, which along the Putnam shoreline are either Moderate Intensity or Low Intensity. For construction or subdivision projects that conform to these requirements, the APA will issue a letter of non-jurisdiction.

DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) and **HD** (Health Department) may have jurisdiction in special cases.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The **Town of Putnam Planning Board** reviews and approves subdivisions that are not subject to APA jurisdiction. The Board also administers the Site Plan Review Ordinance for all construction projects within the township.

The **Washington County Department of Code Enforcement** issues building permits within the Town of Putnam.

Non Profit Organizations

The **LGA** (Lake George Association) is the oldest lake association in the nation. The organization advocates an action-based program of “working together to protect, conserve and improve the beauty and quality of the Lake George Basin.” Projects include identifying and funding storm water remediation, support of Sonar demonstration in the control of Milfoil, continuing education and the Floating Classroom, monitoring land use activities and promoting responsible land use policies, GIS mapping, and many others. The success of the LGA derives to a large extent from an active and wide spread membership which provides participation in projects and programs, financial support and a voice in governmental affairs. Members of the LCP are active in the LGA, and would welcome anyone who is not already a member.

The **Fund for Lake George** supports programs in the basin which will protect and preserve the lake. The Fund has supported the water keeper project, and is currently supporting an Upland Protection Committee which is involved in

LAND USE COMMITTEE, cont'd

developing a model upland development regulation for use basin wide.

The **LGLC** (Lake George Land Conservancy) was organized by the trustees of the Fund for Lake George in 1988 to protect lands around the lake through conservation easements, land donations and fee acquisition. A recent acquisition of the conservancy is the land east of Sagamore Rd. containing the heron rookery.

The **DFWI** (Darrin Fresh Water Institute) is operated by RPI, and located in Bolton Landing. It researches the impact of humans on the Adirondacks, and particularly Lake George. A service it provides is to test, for a nominal fee, drinking water from private residences.

The **Lake George Waterkeeper**, Chris Navitsky, is supported by the Fund for Lake George. He is involved as a consultant and advocate in many aspects of water quality and land use as it affects the lake. He monitors shoreline and water status, responds to all public inquiry, and is an objective advocate for lake protection.

The **Adirondack Council** is an environmental group, with offices in Albany, established in 1975 protect the open-space resources of the six-million-acre Adirondack Park and help sustain the natural and human communities of the region. The council opposes the trial of Sonar in Lake George to control milfoil.

The **LGWC** (Lake George Watershed Conference) is comprised of representatives of the nine municipalities and three counties along the lake, state agencies including the LGPC, the APA, Dept of State, and non-profits including the LGA, The Fund for Lake George, the DFWI and the LGLC. The conference coordinates basin wide programs and projects and assists in obtaining funding primarily through state grants.

Membership Renewal

Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc. is now in its third year of operation. Initially, when LCP was conceived, we were inundated with requests for membership at various levels. The interest in our organization was overwhelming. Since the inception of LCP, we have been instrumental in supporting the Site Plan Review Law in Putnam, deferring re-assessment of property in Putnam, encouraging County officials roll back spending, resulting in no further increases in county taxes for 2005, and very importantly, instituting an ongoing dialogue with Town of Putnam officials. It is important for our organization to continue to encourage new membership and to renew present memberships. Thus said, we ask that you renew your membership to LCP, choosing a level that is comfortable for you and your family. Please complete the membership form found on the inside of the back page and mail it to Treasurer, Charles Gerwig. The Board of Directors of LCP thanks you for your contributions.

Become Involved - Make Your Voice Heard

Become a Member of LCP

Join a Committee

Make a Difference

Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc.

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School District Study Committee

Following, in its entirety, is the report of the School District Study Committee presented by Eugene Frost at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc.

The School Study Committee of the Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc. was organized in August of 2003 to learn more about our school district in order to have a better appreciation of just how our tax dollars are being spent in the all important endeavor of education the children of our township. The committee was made up of three people, myself, a Director of this organization, residing on Black Point Road, Mrs. Kathleen Hild, a member of our organization, a summer resident of Black Point Road and a long time school teacher from the Town of Smithtown, Long Island and Joseph Buchn, also a member of LCP, a summer resident of Gull Bay, an attorney, whose practice was heavily involved with the Schenectady, New York school district.

This Committee met last summer and together drafted a long list of questions we felt we needed answered in order to learn everything we could about the Putnam Central School District. This list of questions was presented to School Superintendent Kent Cauley at a meeting the committee had with Mr. Cauley last fall.

It is no secret that the Putnam Central School District has one of the highest costs per student in the State of New York. Having said that I must add that that statement alone does not tell the entire story. This cost per student is driven higher than surrounding school districts mostly due to the fact that Putnam has so few students. There were forty students in grades K-6 and another six in pre-K. There were about 42 more in grades 7-12 who are enrolled on a tuition basis in the Ticonderoga, New York school district. An additional 13 students attend St. Mary's School in Ticonderoga.

In absolute fairness to the School Board, and the Putnam School Superintendent, when you compare Putnam's school tax rate per thousand to surrounding school districts, Putnam and the Putnam School Board appear to have done a great job of educating our children at a reasonable cost. The decision to tuition students for grades 7-12 has unquestionably saved Putnam residents a great deal of expense.

We live in an age when consolidation of school districts is happening all over the country. Sometimes this is not the best route to follow. We have only to look at the situation in Hague to know that in a consolidation our cost can go up instead of down.

So what is the answer? Everyone is feeling the pinch of high taxes, especially in upstate New York where rate-ables are few, state mandates are many and Medicaid demands are high. For lakeside property owners, the suggestion to rent your home in the summer, rent dock space, or worse yet, take a home equity loan or a reverse mortgage to pay our taxes is both insulting and unacceptable.

There's another aspect to this cruel phenomena that is not being adequately considered by our township neighbors. Putnam's farms are also commanding higher prices than ever. What will happen to the assessed values of these farmsteads after the old Sears farm with only 25 acres sells for over five hundred thousand dollars (asking price is now 695K)? Sales like that will surely demand much higher assessments in the township's interior parcels. Recent sales would indicate that assessments on interior parcels could double.

Since we live in a state where we are unable to secure a proposition on our state ballot capping our tax increase like many other states, notably, California and South Carolina, what is the answer? Will our state representatives push for such a proposition? We should demand that they do. The STAR program just doesn't do it. All of the savings are eaten up by the never-ending double-digit tax increases!

Can we save more on our school taxes? Could we maintain our school board and superintendent and tuition all of our children to Ticonderoga at a present cost that is about \$7000 a year per student less than we are spending now? Could we privatize our school system? Could we offer vouchers and let parents decide? All of these options deserve to be explored.

More importantly, is what we are doing today the best education we can provide for our children? It seems the largest class is six or seven students and the smallest only one. Do our children benefit from this? What was it that drove our school board to send these children to Ticonderoga at grade 7 versus grade nine or grade 1?

School District Study Committee (cont'd)

Obviously this is a very complex issue. The people of the township of Putnam must decide the answer. Could we have a local question put on our next ballot that says something like this? **“Would you be in favor of sending our children presently in grades k-6 to the Ticonderoga, New York School on a tuition basis, if this would save you approximately 30% on your annual school taxes”?** The Putnam School Board and the superintendent with secretarial staff would continue to exist. This is not a consolidation of school districts.

The school building, if this were to happen, could become Town Offices and a community center. It would not be vacant.

This committee has more work to accomplish yet for now we would like to conclude that consolidation at present does not appear to be a viable alternative. It is also apparent that the present school board and notably Superintendent Cauley, have done a great job considering the task presented them and deserve our support. Surely their assistance and cooperation is imperative if we are to uphold the highest level of results while maintaining the most reasonable cost. This committee thanks Superintendent Cauley for his time, courtesy and direct responses to all of our questions. We will continue to inform our board and members as issues develop and we welcome your questions and feedback.

Respectfully Submitted,

E. H. Frost

Become a Member of Lake Communities of Putnam, Inc.

I would like to become a member of LCP

I would like to renew my membership to LCP

Membership Levels

Founding Member	\$100.00
Supporting Member	\$ 50.00
Family Member	\$ 25.00
Individual Member	\$ 10.00

Make check payable to LCP and Mail to
Charles Gerwig, Treasurer, LCP
12 Mayfield Terracc
Ormand Beach, FL 32174

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