

Orange Confidential: Government expert to discuss ward conversion in Chester

By Richard J. Bayne

Times Herald-Record

Posted Jun 16, 2018 at 8:09 PM

Updated Jun 16, 2018 at 8:09 PM

Gerald Benjamin, a local government expert from SUNY New Paltz, will hold a session on Thursday to discuss moving to the election of Town of Chester council members by wards.

The session will be held at the town's new senior center at 81 Laroe Road, and it's set for 7 p.m. It'll be the first large gathering for the \$2 million senior center.

Benjamin, who heads the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz, brought in consultants who helped the Town of Blooming Grove change to a ward system. Blooming Grove council members were elected by wards for the first time in November. Chester's four council members are currently elected townwide.

Thursday's session will be sponsored by a citizens group called Preserve Chester, which has been working to offset the potential bloc-vote power of the 431-home Greens at Chester development, which is to be marketed to Hasidic families. It could eventually house as many as 3,000 people. Greens at Chester is currently under construction at a site located north of West Avenue and east of Conklingtown Road.

With ward elections, town council members would be elected by districts, which would limit Greens at Chester's potential political power. The supervisor would continue to be elected at large.

\$3,370 raised to fight hunger in Warwick area

The Warwick School District's 10th annual Empty Bowls event, in which the community joined in an evening of family run to raise money to combat hunger in the Warwick area, raised \$3,370.

This year's Empty Bowls event was held May 4 at Warwick High School, and guests enjoyed a meal of soup, bread, dessert and a beverage. The event also featured a wide variety of beautiful handmade pottery bowls available for purchase. The bowls are intended to serve as a reminder of all the food insecurity and empty bowls in the world.

Food for the event was donated by local businesses.

The \$3,370 raised at the event came from a number of sources, including admission, sales of the handmade bowls, and a \$1,000 award from the Altice "Charity Champions" program that recognizes high school community service efforts.

The money will be donated to several organizations in the Town of Warwick, including: the Backpack Snack Attack program; the Community Kitchen in Pine Island; the Warwick Ecumenical Food Pantry; the Florida Community Food Pantry; the Greenwood Lake Food Pantry; and the St. Peter Lutheran Church Food Pantry in Pine Island.

Protecting Greenwood Lake from phosphorus

Warwick Supervisor Michael Sweeton is asking residents who live on or near Greenwood Lake to help protect the lake by avoiding the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus.

The U.S. Geological Survey warns that runoff containing phosphorus can produce eutrophication, a process in which a body of water becomes overly enriched with minerals and nutrients that lead to excessive algae growth. The body of water can also become oxygen-depleted.

Sweeton said there's an easy way to avoid using phosphorus if you're buying fertilizer. Fertilizer is sold with a three-number designation, like 12-5-10. The numbers stand for percentage of nitrogen-phosphorous-potassium in the fertilizer.

By only using lawn fertilizer with a "0" as the middle number, Sweeton said, residents can do their part to keep Greenwood Lake healthy. Sweeton is reminding town residents that the state Department of Environmental Conservation has designated the lake an MS-4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer

Systems) protection area, part of an effort to prevent contamination from runoff.

dbayne@th-record.com