Holocaust commemoration held in Kingston

KINGSTON, N.Y. – Over 100 people gathered at Congregation Ahavath Israel in Kingston on Sunday evening to observe the annual commemoration service in remembrance of the Holocaust.

TODAY IN HISTORY: April 28

Teixeira, Ellsbury help Yankees edge Angels, 3-2

New York Lottery numbers drawn Sunday

RUNNING: Kingston Classic 10-kilometer results
NHL Playoffs: Blackhawks, Ducks advance

CHICAGO (AP) — Duncan Keith had a goal and three assists, and the Chicago Blackhawks used a four-goal third period to finish off the St. Louis Blues with a 5-1 victory in Game 6 of their first-round playoff series on Sunday.

Teixeira, Ellsbury help Yankees edge Angels, 3-2
Toronto Raptors even series with Brooklyn Nets, win 87-79

RUNNING: Revamped Kingston Classic keeps in step (videos)

‘Scandal’ actor Columbus Short leaving series
By DERRIK J. LANG The Associated Press

Re-enacting couple amass Revolutionary War-inspired collection

Holocaust commemoration held in Kingston

The Book Sense National Best-Sellers for the week ending April 20
The Mid-Hudson Library System’s most requested for the week ending April 20
Rhinebeck rediscovered in ‘One Hundred Miles from Manhattan’

RUNNING: Kingston Classic 10-kilometer results
For many, weekends are a time to play a round of golf, watch football, go out with friends or just relax. But for Don Beale, and his wife Hella Beale, many weekends are spent recreating the battles of the 1770s and 1780s, when America was fighting for independence from Great Britain.
Kingston >> Six years ago, Mayor James Sottile embarked on a determined push to radically change the way his municipality taxed residents and businesses.

His effort fell short as others – mainly city lawmakers – came to the conclusion that Sottile wanted to change the city’s “base proportion” and shift more of the city’s tax burden from commercial property owners to those with homes.

In the end, the Common Council agreed to lessen the gap, but Sottile did not think they went far enough.
Each year, the gap widened and I felt that we needed to level the playing field.” Once again as officials prepare to announce a new study taxing mechanism on Wednesday.

Arguments for a tax system change are likely to surface once again as officials prepare to announce a new study expected to suggest alternatives to the city’s current taxing mechanism on Wednesday.

In the past, Sottile and others had pitched that the non-homestead/homestead formula was unfair to commercial property owners because they take up less of the city’s taxing base, but pay more of the actual tax bill.

Additionally, supporters said Sottile’s proposal would make Kingston more attractive to developers seeking a tax-friendly atmosphere where jobs could be created. Opponents said homeowners were too overburdened with taxes already and couldn’t afford the type of scenario Sottile was proposing. They also said that businesses are profit-making entities while homeowners are not.

Wednesday’s public release of the homestead/non-homestead report, funded by the Dyson Foundation of Dutchess County, is set to take place at 6 p.m. at City Hall.

Gregg Swanzey, the city’s director of the Office of Economic Development and Strategic Partnership, has said it would outline alternatives to the current homestead, non-homestead taxing system the city uses.

In a press release, Swanzey said the project is an example of what can get done with cooperation.

Mayor Shayne Gallo has said compiling the report was an example of Kingston addressing the taxing structure.

“This study demonstrates Kingston’s willingness to take a leadership role in addressing an issue that many municipalities in the Mid-Hudson Region face,” Gallo said in a press release.

In June, The Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach at SUNY New Paltz was hired to conduct the study using $15,000 grant from the Dyson Foundation.

“The study analyzed the city’s local economy, with particular attention devoted to effects on commercial property values, including a clear and readable overview of the key provisions of the law and a summary of the trends in homestead and non-homestead tax rates over the previous decade,” the press release says.

In the 1980s, state legislation authorized municipalities in New York to tax residential and business property classes at different rates following property revaluation.

The intention was to shift the tax burden from residential property owners to commercial property owners.

Other communities that use the different taxation method include Beacon, Poughkeepsie, Fishkill, Wappingers Falls, Newburgh, Port Jervis, Clarkstown, Haverstraw, West Haverstraw, Sleepy Hollow, Piermont, Stony Point, Kingston, Albany, and Orangetown.

Kingston passed its taxation law in 1988.

Currently, the city taxes business property at approximately 1.8 times the rate it taxes residential property. City business property which comprises 31 percent of the tax base, currently pays 46 percent of the total tax levy.

“Over time, perceived burden on businesses has become a significant issue in many communities, including in Kingston,” a press about the study announcement says. “There is a belief that the higher tax rate discourages commercial development and negatively impacts property value and that the tax is detrimental to
is also the perception that elimination of the differential tax

taxing structure; it only sought to revamp the tax base
1 homeowners paid.

Sottile’s push was an effort to deal with the existing non-homestead/homestead taxing structure in place.

“It is my belief that this action will correct the inequities in our property tax burden and assure that the burden is distributed fairly among the business and property owners in the city of Kingston,” Sottile wrote in a memorandum at the time.

Sottile had said that he was seeking the change in effort to keep a promise he made during the 2007 election campaign.

“I made a commitment to this community that I would address the homestead vs. non-homestead (tax burden) during a revaluation, and that is exactly what I did then. ‘I followed through on my word.’

Originally, Sottile had said residential properties, those on the homestead side of the system, had made up 70 percent of the city’s assessed value but bear only 49 percent of the tax burden. Commercial properties, those considered non-homestead, accounted for just 30 percent of the city’s assessed value but have been carried 51 percent of the tax burden, the mayor said.

Sottile said then a completed property valuation called for placing 62 percent of the property tax burden on homeowners and 38 percent on businesses.

But the new homestead/non-homestead ratio was not written in stone and required the approval of the Common Council.

Lawmakers balked, choosing less of a gap-narrowing measure which still saw businesses paying more than residents.

Gallo last week said it was no wonder that Sottile’s push fell short. He said that the change would have caused an explosion in tax bills for residents.

The two men, both Democrats, have been at strong odds.

“He recommended a broad shift ... that could have been devastating to the homestead taxpayer,” Gallo said. “The option that Sottile recommended was short-sighted at the time because it would have had such a devastating effect on the homestead-based taxpayers.”

Going forward, Gallo said, the city is probably going to have to get state assistance in some way to help create a taxing system fair to both residents and commercial property owners.

Sottile said he showed the will to create a fairer system. The former mayor pointed out that he suggested such a revamped system during the 2007 mayoral campaign and was elected.

“I looked at the bigger picture as to what the future of our community was going to be like, trying to (foster) business growth and not a political future,” Sottile said. “You can study, study, study ... but there has to be a will.”
Paul Kirby is a reporter for the Freeman, covering Kingston politics. He has been at the Freeman since August 1996. Reach the author at pkirby@freemanonline.com or follow Paul on Twitter: @PaulatFreeman.
Richard T. Cahill Jr. • 2 days ago
Talk about hypocrisy. Sottile raised more than any Mayor in Kingston's history!! Now he claims he really wanted to do something different?!

Sottile has zero credibility on this issue. Just be told, Sottile made this problem worse every single year he served as Mayor.

If this article is some kind of trial balloon to gauge support for a possible primary run against Mayor Gallo, then I urge him to reconsider. Sottile has done enough damage to the City of Kingston. Stay retired from city politics.

Benjamin Ghazi • 2 days ago
Nice dash of double speak but really, we don't need any "new Math"! We just need to remove ALL these ridiculous TAX EXEMPT statuses that all the frauds are hiding behind and start having them pay the BUSINESS rate! They are businesses, not holy, not special, not enlightening and not sacred, they are BUSINESSES!

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