



# CIVIC LEAGUE

For New Castle County

*Informed Citizens for Sound County Growth*

P.O. Box 11523 - Wilmington, DE 19850

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**MAY  
2007**

# COUNTY COMMENTS

CIVIC LEAGUE FOR NEW CASTLE COUNTY

*Informed Citizens for Sound County Growth*

**Tuesday, May 15, 2007**

**MEETING**

**7:00 PM at Troop 2**

100 LaGrange Lane - Newark, DE - RTE 40/896

## AGENDA

Discussion of energy alternatives in Delaware  
Annual Meeting: Election of Officers and Directors

### **Open/Good Government Measures on the Move**

*By Speaker of the House Terry Spence*

The State House of Representatives has been a hotbed of activity for "open government/good government" measures thus far this year. In March the House passed House Bill 4, which would require that the state's operating and capital budgets be filed several days prior to the end of session. The lead sponsor of the bill, State Rep. Greg Lavelle (R-Sharples), says the early filing is intended to give the public time to examine the bills before they are enacted. HB 4 is pending action in the Senate Executive Committee.

Another bill designed to provide better access to legislative information is House Bill 60. The measure seeks to open virtually all meetings conducted by legislative committees to the scrutiny of the press and the public.

The General Assembly has been criticized in recent years because the state's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) does not apply to it. State Rep. Robert Valihura (R-Delaware North), the prime sponsor of HB 60, says part of the problem is that the FOIA was written with state agencies in mind and does not easily apply to the General Assembly, which functions very differently. He says HB 60 would create a new section of the Delaware Code to specifically cover the General Assembly. "It mirrors the language in the Freedom of Information Act and deals solely with the State House and Senate," Rep. Valihura said.

"I'm proud of this bill," Rep. Valihura said. "I think this is a significant step forward. It improves our present situation and largely deals with the justifiable criticisms that our General Assembly should be more accessible than it's been in the past."

### STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

- ◆ Monitor and selectively evaluate government actions including laws, regulations and policy.
- ◆ Provide appropriate forums for informing as well as soliciting input from the public.
- ◆ Establish positions based on responsible studies and consistent with the aims and purpose of the organization.
- ◆ Advocate these positions.

Founded in 1962, the Civic League is non-profit volunteer organization, which studies and illuminates County and State government actions concerning comprehensive developments and the quality of life and is a vocal advocate of relevant positions.

County Comments is the official publication of the Civic League for New Castle County.

Frances West,  
President

WWW.  
CivicLeagueforNCC.ORG

PO Box 11523  
Wilmington, DE 19850  
302-529-1529

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Civic League for New Castle County announces that a COMMITTEE OF "GREYBEARDS" has formed to provide analysis, information, opinion, and reasoned "two cents" to the many levels of government, public policy "think tanks", and corporate interests in Delaware. The committee is made up of former Civic League presidents and officers, civic umbrella leaders, and members of the volunteer community. The committee includes those with many years of civic involvement, professional and academic credentials. Agenda items will include the current land use and development issues, Livable DE, water and resource protection issues, energy needs, budget needs, and other timely issues. Frances West, current President of NCC Civic League, will convene the first gathering during the latter part of June.

For more information on the Civic League for New Castle County  
visit our web site: [WWW.CivicLeagueForNCC.Org](http://WWW.CivicLeagueForNCC.Org)

(continued)

A separate initiative by State Rep. Donna Stone (R-Dover South) seeks to open the State House of Representatives in a different way. Rep. Stone said she is backing a project to webcast the audio of the chamber's proceedings. "Forty-one states already webcast their legislative action. As the president-elect of the National Conference of State Legislatures, I'm embarrassed that Delaware is so far behind the curve on using technology to make the legislative process more transparent to our citizens."

Legislative staffers estimate that streaming the House's live audio through a link posted on the General Assembly's website will cost less than \$5,000. The speaker of the House Terry Spence (R-Stratford) has pledged to pay those costs out of current House funds.

"This initiative can be done in-house, with existing money and will not require that we take any legislative action," Rep. Stone said. "I hope the Senate will follow our lead and stream their audio on the net with a link posted next to ours."

### Nominations for 2008

President	Daniel Bockover
1st. VP	Dianne Kemski
2nd VP	Martha Denison
3rd VP	Charles Mulholland
Secretary	Nancy Willing
Treasurer	David Bailey
Past. Pres.	Frances M. West

### 2007 Officers

President	Frances M. West
1st VP	V. Eugene McCoy
2nd VP	David June, Sr.
3rd VP	Daniel Bockover
Secretary	Christine Whitehead
Treasurer	David Bailey
Past Pres.	Richard F. Davis

## **Volunteers Needed to Help Report Sudden Wetland Dieback Locations**

*by Amy Jacobs / Chris Bason*

Delaware's Sudden Wetland Dieback Task Group is seeking volunteers to report sudden wetland dieback (SWD), a condition affecting salt marsh vegetation within Delaware's Inland Bays. SWD is the rapid death of at least the above-ground parts of salt marsh vegetation or the failure of plants to grow during single or multiple growing seasons. Delaware residents can report the occurrence of SWD by completing the Delaware Volunteer Salt Marsh Monitoring form. The form and additional information are available on DNREC's web site, [www.dnrec.delaware.gov](http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov). A map of the reported and confirmed locations of SWD will be added as locations are determined.

Delaware's first instances of SWD were reported last summer along the shores of the Inland Bays. Led by scientists from DNREC's wetland monitoring and assessment team, preliminary data on the condition of marshes with and without SWD were collected as part of a larger study to evaluate the health of the Inland Bays tidal wetlands. A SWD Task Group, led by DNREC and the Center for the Inland Bays, was formed to develop a strategy to monitor SWD and determine if restoration efforts will be required to prevent the loss of these marshes. In 2006, aerial surveys of approximately a quarter of the salt marshes within the Inland Bays found that 41% of marshes exhibited some vegetation dieback.

"Sudden wetland dieback is of great concern," said Amy Jacobs, environmental scientist with DNREC's Watershed Assessment Section. "Delaware's Inland Bays have already lost large areas of salt marsh as a result of human activities. Our salt marshes are high-value ecosystems that are vital to the health of the Inland Bays and our coastal heritage. Dieback events need to be identified, monitored, and carefully managed to prevent rapid loss of these critical resources."

Salt marshes protect coastal development and protection of lands from erosion and storm surges, provide critical habitat for wildlife, regulate bay and coastal ecology by filtering and storing nutrients and sediments, help regulate climate, and provide invaluable aesthetic appeal. Sudden wetland dieback can result in the death of the vegetation in salt marshes. When SWD occurs, a marsh appears brown or dead, because little or no live green vegetation is present and the dead plants from the previous years remain, or the underlying surface is exposed. Sudden wetland dieback has occurred along the East coast from Louisiana to Maine during the past decade, however SWD was first identified in Delaware in June 2006.

DNREC is seeking short-term funding through the EPA and the Center for the Inland Bays to monitor SWD to determine the distribution and recovery of dieback areas. A combination of remote sensing tools, comprehensive aerial photography and onsite data collection will provide valuable information to help scientists determine if restoration activities for affected sites that don't recover on their own are required. The Task Group also recommended that more research is needed to understand the dominant stressors affecting tidal marshes that may lead to SWD.

The SWD Task Group includes scientists from DNREC, Center for the Inland Bays, the Maryland Department of Nature Resources, Maryland Coastal Bays program, Duffield Associates, DelDOT, University of Delaware, and Wetlands Research Services.

For more information contact Amy Jacobs with DNREC's Division of Water Resources, 302-739-9939 or Chris Bason with the Center for the Inland Bays 302-226-8105.

### **DIRECTORS 2008**

Betty Abrams  
Wayne Ashbee  
John Harrison  
David June  
Michael McDowell  
Joseph Mitchell  
Donnie Shankie  
Victor Singer  
Eugene Snell  
Charles Weymouth  
William Woznicki  
Michael Barbieri (new)

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Kenneth Murphy  
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Gary Warren  
( 4 vacancies )

### **DIRECTORS 2010 \*\***

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Connie Georgov  
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V. Eugene McCoy  
Frank Sims  
Marion Stewart  
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\*\*reelected for a 3 year term