

# The Examiner

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September 15 - 21, 2009

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 3, Issue 106

## Affordable Housing Resisted in Mt. Pleasant

By Abby Luby

Westchester County Legislator John Nonna told a large crowd at Mount Pleasant Town Hall last week that the town was not obligated to build affordable housing for minorities because of the anti-discrimination lawsuit settlement by Westchester County.

The Sept. 9 meeting was the first of its kind in Westchester on the controversial settlement between the county and the federal government. The agreement requires the county to construct 750 affordable housing units in communities with few minorities.

More than 100 people heard Nonna explain that communities that have an African-American population of less than 3 percent and a Hispanic population of less than 7 percent are subject to the terms of the settlement.

"It's my position that the Town of Mount Pleasant shouldn't be subject to this settlement," said Nonna, who received an immediate round of applause. "Mount Pleasant is in a unique position because



ABBY LUBY PHOTO

Hawthorne resident and former congressional candidate Jim Russell responds to County Legislator John Nonna at a special town hall meeting last week in Mount Pleasant regarding the county's recent settlement agreement to build more affordable housing throughout Westchester. Many of those in the crowd of more than 100 people who spoke opposed the county settlement.

we already have over 10 percent African-American residents."

Legislators will be voting on the proposed settlement in about two weeks. It is unlikely Westchester can win the case

in court. "The chances of winning a trial are low and risky," Nonna warned.

If legislators vote to turn down the settlement and fight it out in court, the

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## P'ville Man Honored For Service at 9/11 Ceremony

By Martin Wilbur

You could excuse Alan Shapiro if he wasn't accustomed to all the attention he received last week.

For more than 20 years, Shapiro, a Pleasantville resident, has tirelessly volunteered with the Interfaith Caring Community of Greenburgh, which he now directs, and has worked with a long list of charities throughout Westchester. He is also director of The Sanctuary, a shelter for runaways at Children's Village, an organization that provides a safe haven and resources for troubled youngsters and their families.

On Sept. 11, Shapiro was one of five Westchester residents honored following the county's 9/11 ceremony at Kensico Dam Plaza in Valhalla with a Call to

## Affordable Housing Resisted at Mount Pleasant Forum

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county could lose the \$180 million lawsuit filed by the ADC (Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York) and be cut off from another \$30 million in annual federal housing aid. There is also a chance of large penalties, including a \$50 million payout to ADC, if the case is lost.

If the settlement is accepted, it will cost an estimated \$60 million to build the units. Nonna said he wants Mount Pleasant to be part of the process of deciding where the units will be built.

"I don't believe Mount Pleasant is subject to this settlement, but we want to be at the table when the county approves the affordable housing proposals," Nonna said. "We should not accept any part of this settlement, and I will vote against the proposal to put affordable housing in

Mount Pleasant. When there is a prospect that might affect the value of your house, there is a concern."

According to the settlement, affordable housing units are geared toward workers with low income levels. Household earnings for a four-person household who is renting a unit has to be under \$68,445 and can not exceed \$84,200. "It's what your average teacher or firefighter makes," Nonna said.

The units are expected to be spread across mostly affluent towns and villages. The settlement also stipulates the units have to be evenly split between rentals and those that can be bought, and 25 percent have to be for seniors. Pending the settlement's approval by the legislators, the county will decide where the units will be located.

Some in the crowd voiced their objection to the settlement.

"If Chappaqua is willing, then put them there!" cried out William Honegger, a Hawthorne resident. "Why should they impose affordable housing when they have group homes like Cedar Knolls? It doesn't matter anyway because Spano is going to raise taxes anyway. King Andy."

Former Congressional candidate and Hawthorne resident Jim Russell, who heads up the group Save Our Neighborhoods, urged Nonna to vote against the settlement, claiming the federal government was intervening in local affairs. In a statement Russell issued to residents, he argued that if the case was lost, the county could appeal to the Appellate Division of the U.S. District Court and to the U.S. Supreme Court, with

the total expense coming to \$300 million that could be payable over 15 years.

"All communities in Westchester opposed this over time and you know we don't want it," Russell told Nonna.

Listening from the back of the Town Hall courtroom was Donna Tedeschi, a seven-year Mount Pleasant resident. "I just got information about this and I wanted to hear what was going on. No one in my neighborhood has been talking about this," she said.

Nonna said he understood the resistance to affordable housing in certain communities such as Mount Pleasant.

"I do believe a more diverse community is good, but this settlement may not even achieve this," he said. "The question is if you build it [affordable housing], will they come?"