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## 2021 Environmental Questionnaire for Westchester Candidates

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the New York League of Conservation Voters Questionnaire.

To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please consult [NYLCV's 2021 Westchester Policy Agenda](#) when answering the questions.

The New York League of Conservation Voters is the only non-partisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy, and open space through political action. This questionnaire is designed to elicit your views regarding what environmental, public health, clean energy and transit, and environmental justice groups consider to be the most important issues of the day. Responses may inform NYLCV's educational and legislative programs and actions NYLCV takes in the election cycle.

Responses should be considered public. Although NYLCV may choose not to publicize the responses to every question, verbatim responses may be reproduced and distributed publicly. If so, your responses may be shortened, if necessary, but will not be edited in substantive ways. If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite. For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, NYLCV will note as much in its public materials.

NYLCV and its partners in the environmental policy arena believe that New York's voters are determined to make the environment a voting issue this year. Candidate positions on issues such as protecting public health, building a clean energy future, and mitigating climate change will help voters decide how to cast their ballots this election cycle. This questionnaire is one of the primary ways the public will get this information.

Here are a few guidelines:

- Questionnaires are due **Friday, May 21, 2021**
- The completed questionnaire is mandatory for endorsement consideration and must be submitted via e-mail as a Microsoft Word file to: [politics@nylcv.org](mailto:politics@nylcv.org)
- Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg ([jklainberg@nylcv.org](mailto:jklainberg@nylcv.org))
- After receipt of the completed questionnaire, candidates will be invited to participate in a formal interview with a local Chapter Board.
- General election endorsements will be made by the NYLCV State Board on July 29, 2021.

## CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFORMATION

Candidate name: Dana Levenberg

Office sought (& district number if applicable): Town Supervisor

Campaign e-mail: levenberg13@gmail.com

Campaign phone: 914-391-2303

Website: danalevenberg.com

Facebook page: Ossining Town Supervisor Dana Levenberg

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Campaign manager's name and email: Victoria Gearity victoriagearity@gmail.com

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Scheduler's name and email: Victoria Gearity victoriagearity@gmail.com

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

**My focus as Town Supervisor for the past 6 years has been to support and enhance a healthy Ossining—economically, environmentally, physically, and mentally healthy with equitable outcomes for all. To do so, I have led the way on fighting climate change and raising the need for us to take action to the Town. I signed a pledge to target 100% carbon neutrality by 2040. We pledged to work with Ossining 100 to bring a carbon tracker to our community so that we could get help identify where the big areas of energy use continue to burden our environment and how individuals can take action. Our new Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability elements takes a holistic approach to addressing issues of sustainability from a land-use and planning perspective. We recently adopted the NY Stretch Code to improve our new buildings' envelopes. We have also increased our Moody's rating during my tenure, brought out properties to full value assessment, and kept taxes in check. I continue to live my pro-environment agenda at home as well. I bought a fully electric car in 2019,**

**converted to an electric dryer as I try to segue off of natural gas, we compost our food scraps, we added solar to our home in 2019, participate in Grid Rewards, and we buy locally as much as possible.**

**The additional details of my commitment to our environment can be seen in the answers to the questions below, which showcase the many initiatives I have led our Town Board to adopt. I will continue to put the environment in the forefront and very much appreciate NYLCV's past and hopefully future endorsement.**

## **ISSUES**

Each year, NYLCV works closely with New York's leading environmental, public health, conservation, energy, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify the most pressing priorities on fighting climate change, conserving land and water, and protecting public health. These issues drive NYLCV's advocacy work throughout the legislative session, influence the bills we select for NYLCV's Environmental Scorecards, and informs the decision on the candidates we choose to endorse. To ensure your responses are in alignment with the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV's 2021 Westchester Policy Agenda](#) when formulating your responses.

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity concerning, all the policy priorities of our partners per the following issues:

### Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. We must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act will require action at all levels of government to achieve its ambitious goal of reducing economy wide emissions 85% by 2050



and achieving 70% renewable energy by 2030. By allocating resources wisely, local governments can have a significant impact on energy use and the environment. Localities must also adapt to a changing climate and include resiliency planning in all aspects of future governance.

## 2. Energy (p. 5)

I led the charge (pun intended!) to introduce and pass Solar and Battery Energy Storage local laws, and a Solar PILOT local law as well. Since then, Maryknoll (located in the town) partnered with Ecogy to install a Canopy Solar installation, which is also a community solar project. Not only does it benefit the grid, but it also benefits local electric customers, with very few trees cut down. Borrego Solar was also recently approved for a Battery Energy Storage installation at St. Augustine's, and it will be organized in a similar vein to community solar. We passed multiple resolutions over the years of my tenure to be part of the Westchester Power CCA and opted in to 100% green choice each contract. I helped negotiate the second contract to get more money back for Sustainable Westchester to advertise the program. I serve on the board of Sustainable Westchester as well. In my personal life too, I have worked to move to carbon-free electricity generation. When my big shade tree in my backyard died in 2019, we took advantage of the additional sunlight and put up solar panels.

## 3. Transportation (p.5)

The Town has partnered with 511 NY Ride Share to bring Car Free Day to Ossining. We have introduced bike lanes to Ossining. We piloted a Lime bike share program. We have introduced fully electric and plug in hybrid vehicles to our fleet. We now own 4 and soon will own 5. We have installed 3 EV charging stations at 3 parks, including one by the train station. We will soon also own the first fully electric mini bus in Westchester.

We are currently working with Historic Hudson River Towns to hopefully develop an RFP for a regional bike/ebike/escooter share program. This was my initiative.

I have personally purchased first a hybrid, and then a fully electric car.

## 4. Resiliency (p. 6)

With the Village of Ossining, we applied for Cornell's Climate Adaptive Design Studio to come to Ossining, which we won in 2019. The maps and designs for the Ossining Waterfront lay the foundation for future waterfront protection and development. From park rehabilitation, to stabilization, to opening the beach, to working with MTA/Metro North for a long term vision for the Hudson Line, this study has given us so much visionary material to work for as we develop our comprehensive plans for the future of Ossining and this portion of the Hudson River Valley.

We were also introduced to other waterfront communities' planning and environmental groups through the Flood Resiliency Network.

We have applied for and won multiple trees for tribs/buffers in a bag packages to plant along streams and ponds in the Town. We have also won urban forestry grants, which allowed us to inventory our trees, and we are now working to set up a tree management program. We have recently established a tree bank and also a Parks Habitat Stewards/volunteer group to clear invasives and plant natives. I have personally participated in multiple trail clearing efforts. We have signed onto the Monarch/pollinator pathways pledge and planted native perennial throughout Town parks. We have brought in the NY/NJ Trailways organization to help steward the Unique Area which is accessible through the Town of Ossining via the Old Croton Aqueduct.

#### 5. Solid Waste (p. 7)

In 2019, through a state grant, we introduced a Food Scrap Recycling program, located in our Town Park, right next to our Organic Community Garden. Green Ossining (our volunteer green committee shared with the Village of Ossining) oversees food scrap collection at the Farmers Market on Saturdays as well, which our Parks Department then consolidates for with the other bins at the park for weekly pick up. Soon, we will have our first compost give-back day for residents to utilize some of the compost from the facility.

We also subscribe to the Recycle Right app, which includes access to the Recyclopedia, through Sustainable Westchester. It allows residents to quickly find out info about what they can recycle, when, and how, including unusual objects.

### Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution.

#### 6. Clean Land, Air, and Water (p. 9)

We applied with the Villages of Ossining and Briarcliff and Green Ossining to become an Energy Smart Homes community. We have introduced geothermal, home energy audits, and air source heat pumps to homeowners and renters through this program. We have also introduced Community Solar and Grid Rewards as well to help people underwrite clean electricity generation and reduce the load on the grid. We also joined Croton 100/Ossining 100 which lets people download the Carbon Tracker to see how they can individually reduce their carbon footprint. I was the first to try to app in Ossining. We regularly add information

to our website to educate the public about protecting waterways by reducing the use of pesticides/herbicides/harmful fertilizers. Our parks department used the “love em and leaf em” technique. We passed leaf blower legislation. We passed a local law to allow bee keeping in the Town. Annually, we host Green Ossining’s Earth Day Festival—one of the largest in the area. During COVID, it was run as a weeklong online/in-person event with lots of education.

#### 7. Sustainable Development (p. 10)

We applied for and won a grant through the CFA process for a Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements as well as to develop a Complete Streets approach for our main business corridor. We adopted a Complete Streets policy, and are in process on North State Rd., which is to use the Planners4Health toolbox to set parameters for healthy, sustainable development. Pace’s Land Use Law Center is our partner. Open space plus bikeability/walkability are rising to the top as priorities in our community. Making sure we have adequate/safe housing, looking at walkable/livable communities and mixed use is also at the top of our list. Also, compact design and givebacks from developers, our tree bank, protection of our watershed are all critical to sustainable development. We are working with other communities in the Indian Brook/Croton River Watershed to develop an overlay zone that each community can adopt to help protect this sensitive area.

#### 8. Parks and Open Spaces (p.10 – 11)

Our Parks and Open Spaces have always been a haven, but even more so during the pandemic. Our focus is constant upgrade to our parks, whether for organized sports, pick-up games, or impromptu outdoor play. We have invested in upgrading bathrooms, splash pads, pavilions, working on tennis courts, basketball courts, and introduced a multi use gaming area, new playground equipment, including ADA accessible swings, and outdoor adult fitness equipment as well. I also tapped a group of neighbors to get a volunteer stewardship group together to help combat invasives and educate the public about new plantings and protective measures we can take to improve the passive areas in our parks. We have also supported Eagle Scout and Girl Scout projects, like a GaGa pit they built, a bridge over a stream bed, soon flower beds of native perennials that attract pollinators, and buffers in bags. Our EAC has been working on mapping a way to connect our open spaces. A few years ago we received a \$30k grant from the HV Greenway to study a bike connector route that would join our “North South” open space assets with an east-west connector, tying downtown Ossining to the N. County/Empire State Trail. We, along with the Town of New Castle, Village of

Ossining and help from Westchester County Planning and the NYSDOT established MOGO, Millwood Ossining GO, a ski map of bikeable connecting routes for different levels of biking. We also put \$50k of money we received through Clean Energy Communities toward striping State Rd for biking. Now we are seeking to get the “Cadillac” route, along NYS Route 133 added to NYMTC’s Transportation Improvement Plan so we can put in a dedicated bike lane on this road. We will continue to look for opportunities to connect the Old Croton Aqueduct, Briarcliff Peekskill Trailway, and Empire State Trail, and also find walking paths as well.

We have also been actively rehabilitating a passive park, Sally Swope, to make it easier to walk year round and ADA compliant. We hope to have this park opened back up again by mid summer.

I always participate in I Love My Parks Day and Riverkeeper’s River Sweep to help keep our parks clean of litter and invasives.

#### 9. Farms and Local Food (p. 11)

I am a big supporter of our local restaurants and food purveyors and shop weekly at the local Farmers Market as well as promote it through my weekly eblasts to Town residents and friends. During the pandemic, when we had to shut down and cancel our Friday night summer concert series, I partnered with a local music school to host Zoom concerts and also produced Facebook Live videos to showcase take out meals from local eateries. These were a big hit! I also support our local vegan restaurant that buys local, and craft brewery and work closely with our chamber to help in every way possible. During the pandemic we also worked to supply masks and hand sanitizer to local businesses, and fought to keep open our farmers market. I have also supported meatless Mondays in my weekly communications.