

Dailey Freeman  
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# 'Reval' scares city politicians

**HAIRY SITUATION** – Town of Rochester Assessor **Sharon Hornbeck**, referring to widespread angst over reassessment in her Ulster County community, could have been speaking for Kingston Mayor **Jim Sottile** when she recently said, “As soon as you say ‘reval’ everybody’s hair stands on end.”

But, unlike Kingston, fast-growing Rochester is proceeding apace toward a 2006 reassessment of its 4,600 properties. Sottile says state regs are far too complicated to meet his original target of a city-wide reassessment next year. It will have to be moved back to 2008, he says.

Other than Kingston having almost twice as many properties – about 8,400 – one wonders why a small rural town like Rochester can carry out a reval in reasonably short order while the relatively sophisticated county seat can not. Maybe they’re smarter, more efficient or, more likely, willing to take the political heat.

In Kingston, the hairs stand straighter on people’s heads.

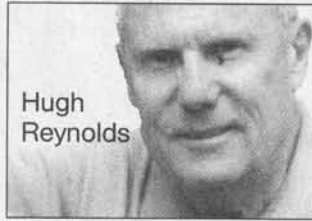
Nothing fires up long-time property owners like the prospect of having their holdings revalued. Newcomers are less inclined to rebel. Last in they’re paying the higher market prices a reval would reflect.

As Hornbeck observed, say “reval” to property owners and they start to hyperventilate. Hairs are still erect in Saugerties, where a recent reassessment saw property values more than double in many cases. That doesn’t necessarily mean taxes will double, but there certainly is the potential, given the expanded tax base.

According to the state, Kingston assesses at 36 percent of market value, meaning in the likelihood that a reval doubled assessments, city rolls would still be well behind what is seen as a rising market. So, the longer they wait, the worse it gets.

The mayor’s willingness to delay what had been for him

## City Beat



Hugh Reynolds

a priority project is mostly about placating his Nervous Nelly aldermen. Council members shrink at going door to door this fall answering questions about revaluation, and now Sottile has put it off for another election.

Smart politics? Maybe. Good government? Not

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### HERE AND THERE –

The Ulster County Democratic Women’s Club is being revived after a 20-year hiatus, only this generation of activists won’t be calling it a dowdy-sounding “club.” Ulster County Democratic Women will do, thank you.

The club – make that, organization – already has an exclusive look, which for some adds cache. Rep. **Maurice Hinchey**, D-Hurley, for instance, will welcome “like-minded friends” to the official launch at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 5 at Le Canard Enchaîné in Kingston.

Like-minded friends sounds like another way to say fellow travelers. Conservative Republicans or friends of **Karl Rove** need not apply.

**March Gallagher**, former candidate for supervisor in Saugerties and vice president of the fledgling organization, says it will serve as a fund-raising arm of the Democratic Party with a focus on female candidates.

The last event the old club ran was in 1984, when vice presidential candidate **Geraldine Ferraro** came to Kingston for a fund-raising breakfast. ...

Disgraced former Dutchess County Republican Committee Chairman **Bill Paroli** is back as a committee member. After being convicted of political extortion in 2000 and

serving 21 months in federal prison, Paroli quietly circulated petitions in his old town of Poughkeepsie district and, with no one opposing him, rejoined the GOP roster.

GOP Chair **Betsy Brilliant** pronounced herself “shocked” – shocked, I tell you – that the felonious Paroli would have the gall to return to his old stomping grounds.

The chair’s analysis wasn’t particularly brilliant on this one. The wonder is the pugnacious Paroli, 77, took this long to launch a comeback.

Republicans will just have to live with their pet pariah, much to the glee of Democrats. ...

Ulster County planners didn’t seem particularly upset that 18 percent of open land in a Southern Ulster agricultural protection district went over to private development in the last eight years. At that rate, there will be condos in every cornfield and orchard in about 40 years.

Agricultural District 2 runs from the county’s southern boundary along the Walkill River through the towns of Shawangunk, Plattekill, New Paltz and Gardiner. Its western border is the Shawangunk Ridge.

County Planner **Dennis Doyle** notes that the “core farming” areas in the 24,000-acre district remained intact, while outlying sections were developed for new housing. He also cited the “significant investments” by farmers in their orchards and technology as reasons to believe agricultural will remain strong.

About 5,100 acres in the district have been lost to development since 1997.

Some of the best laid plans run afoul of market forces. These planners seem to be operating in a pre-9/11 world. Preserving open space will be a greater challenge in the coming years. ...

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