

Dutchess County Legislature Board Meetings

January 3, 2024: Organizational Meeting

The main event at this meeting was the election of Will Truitt as the new Chair of the Legislature. Truitt has served as a legislator for 8 years, the last two of which as the Republican Majority leader. Minority leader Yvette Valdes-Smith was also nominated for the Chair position. The vote- 16-9 in favor of Truitt was along party lines.

Legislator Truitt gave a warm speech thanking and acknowledging his family and colleagues, setting forth his priorities, and calling for civility in the Legislature and volunteerism from the community. (In describing himself as a product of this community, he shared that his grandfather, Franklin Delano Truitt, may have been the first baby in the United States to be named after the 32nd President!)

According to Truitt, the top concern is public safety. He urged the need to continue to address “the drug crisis in our backyard” and to support the work of Dutchess County Sheriff’s Office. He also pointed to two newly elected legislators, Rob Faust and Chris Rolison, both former police officers whom he asked to serve as Chair and Vice Chair of the Public Safety Committee.

Next, Truitt voiced worry over what he called the “threat that remains as New York State continues to push unfunded mandates on us while pulling back crucial funding” in an effort to close projected budget deficits. He also voiced strong opposition to a new State Election Law that shifts several town and county races from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years to coincide with statewide and national elections. (While Truitt characterized this new law as a “power grab” that will result in local issues being drowned out “by the circus like atmosphere of presidential and congressional elections,” proponents of the law argue that the change aims to address the lower voter turnout typically associated with off-year elections.)

Truitt also prioritized youth programming, the Think Ahead Program at Dutchess Community College, and county parks. Noting in particular an “EMS crisis,” he called from volunteers to become involved in tackling issues facing the county “from veterans to the airport to the EMC and the Tick Task Force and everything in between.”

Other matters included the passage of eight resolutions; all received unanimous support and little or no discussion. The resolutions concerned the appointment of the Clerk (Leigh Wager) and the Deputy Clerk, adoption of temporary rules, attendance at conventions and conferences, undertakings, establishing dates of regular monthly meetings, and the designation of official newspapers for publication of local laws and notices.