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## 2007 Questionnaire for Local Candidates

### OVERVIEW

The science on climate change is in: Global warming is happening, and the enormity of the problem requires action at every level of government. Comprehensive solutions for climate change exist, but the years of refusal at the federal level have left the U.S. government behind the curve. Because of this, the real innovation on climate change in this country is happening at the local level. It's the mayors, county executives, and town supervisors in New York who can lead the way on climate change.

By “thinking globally and acting locally,” the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) is calling upon all candidates for local office to put the issue of climate change at heart of their campaign. Our sister organization, the New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund (NYLCVEF) has compiled a list of actions state and local governments can take to address this important issue with examples of what’s been either done or proposed elsewhere in New York State.

Before responding to the questions on this questionnaire, we recommend you review this document.

### PROCESS


After receipt of the questionnaire, you will be invited to participate in a formal interview with our local chapter board. The interview will provide you with an opportunity to present your credentials and vision for combating climate change on the local level, elaborate on your questionnaire responses, and respond to questions.

The completed questionnaire and interview are mandatory for endorsement consideration.

NYLCV will endorse and work to elect candidates who can demonstrate a willingness and capacity to advance a comprehensive climate action agenda for their municipality.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

 Please submit questionnaire responses via email to: [politics@nylcv.org](mailto:politics@nylcv.org)

 Questions or extension requests may be directed to:  
Joshua Klainberg, Political Director ([jklainberg@nylcv.org](mailto:jklainberg@nylcv.org))

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please provide us with the following information:

Candidate Name: *Robert A. Morabito, Rye Town Supervisor*

District #: *Town Supervisor- this is a town-wide position and there is no district*

## PERSONAL INITIATIVES

1. What have been your most significant achievements to date on environmental issues?

*This year, we conducted an energy audit of our major facilities. We embraced the finding and have begun reaping the benefits of the changes we have made. We reduced our carbon footprint by replacing most incandescent bulbs with new energy efficient low wattage fluorescent bubs. This program will reduce our use of energy, reduce our carbon footprint, reduce strain on air conditioning compressors, and will simply save the municipality money through lower utilities fees for lighting and less air conditioning and less man hours lost replacing bulbs on a regular basis by using the long-lasting new bulbs.*

*Only since I became Supervisor was the Town named a Tree City USA by The National Arbor Day Foundation. This is the first time that the Town has applied and received the designation. The National Arbor Day Foundation sponsors the Tree City USA program in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. To become a Tree City USA, a community must prove its commitment to an effective, ongoing community forestry program. The above are two very concrete and tangible examples of what we have done on a local level to influence the entire community to be more environmentally sensitive.*

*We have just acquired Liberty Elms- the disease resistant variety which we are planting in a park as a way to reintroduce this majestic American species back to public spaces. American elms were devastated close to 100 years ago by a horrible beetle. All across America these trees were cut down and destroyed. However, The Liberty Elm is resistant and can safely be planting bringing their grand and majestic canopy back. We have made a point of publicizing their planting and explained how it is safe and that more should be planted. My office has received inquires from citizens who have been encouraged by our planting effort and want to plant elms too since becoming aware of their values from us.*

*I instituted a program whereby the Town is now using a variety of natural and organic commercial cleaning products at all Town parks and buildings. The cleaners are hydrogen peroxide based cleaners with no choking chemical fumes or allergic chemical residues. Also,*

*non-toxic disinfectants and garlic-based insecticides are being used. All products have been accredited by environmental and governmental agencies.*

2. Please outline your environmental priorities, should you be elected.

*The guiding principle that has directed us is a commitment to consistently improve the quality of life for the entire community through being good stewards of the parks and public open spaces entrusted to us.*

*We have supported the establishment of Friends of Rye Town Park (one of the largest citizen based green space advocacy groups in Westchester with almost 2000 dues paying members) and Friends of Crawford Park. These citizen-based groups are very helpful to the parks in developing consensus and prioritizing the various improvement projects considered for the parks. Together, these successful public/private partnerships have been responsible for the planting of over 20,000 spring flowering bulbs in the parks, 100's of large trees, and many shrubs and perennials.*

*Also, we commissioned model plans of our major parks and now have strategic long-term vision for them. With the plans, we have charted a clear course that will transcend our time in public service and assure that our valuable public spaces will be cared for correctly. These plans are invaluable in seeking grant, public and or private funding for improvements, too.*

*Our environmental philosophy led us to obtain Tree City, USA status. Now that we have it, future officials will be held to continue it thus assuring a philosophy that the tree canopy of the community is important and must be cared for. We have educated our staffs, who are now very much aware of environmental issues and our overriding good stewardship of the parks and open spaces in our care.*

*As good steward of the land we successfully had the African-American Cemetery designated a state and national historic landmark that will ensure the protection of this unique site in perpetuity. We have developed a broad-based coalition to develop consensus for the future of this historic landscape. Also, the local NAACP is a partner with us in preserving this tremendously important connection to the past. We are planning an oral history by way of taping many of the elder members of the African –American community that has family members buried in the cemetery. We are working closely with the Rye Historical Society on cataloging and documenting all existing conditions. Also, we have retained the services of a licensed landscape architect to develop a model plan and drawings for the site. The drawings are an integral part of our plan to apply for grant and other monies to make capital improvements to this unique public open space and preserve its unique place in our community.*

*We are very proud of our commitment to good stewardship of parks and public spaces. Our efforts today will ensure that future generation will be able to enjoy these valuable and important public resources.*

## **COMMITTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE PRINCIPLES**

3. Will you join the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign by introducing and passing a resolution pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from local government operations and throughout your

municipality? *If reelected, I would join the CCP and introduce a resolution pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

4. Will you enter your municipality into the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, whereby you would commit to take following three actions: *I would enter our municipality into the U.S Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, whereby committing to the three (3) major actions.*
  - Strive to meet or beat the Kyoto Protocol targets through actions ranging from anti-sprawl land-use policies to urban forest restoration projects to public information campaigns?
  - Urge state government, and the federal government, to enact policies and programs to meet or beat the greenhouse gas emission reduction target suggested for the United States in the Kyoto Protocol -- 7% reduction from 1990 levels by 2012?
  - Urge the U.S. Congress to pass the bipartisan greenhouse gas reduction legislation, which would establish a national emission trading system?

## **LEADERSHIP**

Based on what's been either done or proposed by other local governments in New York State (see the NYLCVEF fact sheet at [www.nylcvf.org/localgov](http://www.nylcvf.org/localgov)), ideas from outside of the state or your own original ideas, please outline your plans to address the following areas:

5. Air Quality- *We have an aggressive tree planting program. Each year we attempt to plant more trees than before. We have generated broad community support for this effort by seeking out grants, special utility matching programs and private funding along with municipal money. Together, we have been able to leverage our modest budget funding into a substantial tree planting effort. It has engendered broad support by showing that we are being fiscally conservative while being environmealy active and won over even those who grumble about anything.*
6. Energy Efficiency- *We are committee to reducing our carbon footprint. Recently we conducted an energy audit of our major facilities. We plan to se what we have learned and institute in all Town facilities like replacing most incandescent bulbs with new energy efficient low wattage fluorescent bubs. This program will reduce our use of energy, reduce our carbon footprint, reduce strain on air conditioning compressors, and will simply save the municipality money through lower utilities fees for lighting and less air conditioning and less man hours lost replacing bulbs on a regular basis by using the long-lasting new bulbs.*
7. Green Building Development- *As a small municipality we do not have this jurisdiction. However, we do endorse the positions as described by NYLCVEF.*
8. Smart Growth- *Our staff is small and municipal funds are modest. However, we have retained a landscape architect who provides constant direction and professional advice to us*

*in making improvements to all of our public open spaces. His services have guided staff in their daily operations which has paid tremendous benefits by staff improving their M/O of public open spaces. He has been successful in drafting grants which have funded various public green space improvements, too. As a small municipality our reach is not as broad as larger municipalities. However, we do endorse the positions as described by NYLCVEF.*