



Nassau advice on DWI law sought

Westchester may use L.I. county as model for car forfeiture plan

Ken Valenti
The Journal News

The DWI seizure bill under consideration by Westchester County isn't as tough as it could be — but the sponsoring legislator says it would be fair and workable.

Rather than taking a car as soon

as a driver is arrested on the drunken-driving charge, the bill would allow the county to take the car once a person is convicted.

Legislator Peter Harckham, D-Katonah, who proposed the measure, said he wants suspects to get their due process, and he did not want police to have to impound large numbers of cars while suspects waited for trial.

"We don't want the police to be in the used-car business," he said.

Nassau County, which Westchester officials are turning to for ad-

vice on the law, dropped its seizure-upon-arrest approach when the law was deemed unconstitutional in 2003 because it was too broad, said Christine Sullivan, a deputy county attorney there. When Nassau enacted a revised law the following year, it allowed cars to be seized upon conviction.



Peter Harckham

Taking the car upon arrest requires hearings in each case, an impractical burden, she said.

Westchester considered a seizure-upon-arrest version of the law in 2003 but faced criticism from civil libertarians, partly on the claim that it violated a defendant's right to be presumed innocent.

Legislators considering the proposal will invite someone from Sullivan's office to an October meeting to offer advice. Last week, the legislature's Public Safety and

Legislation committees were given advice from Long Island attorney Andrew Campanelli, who ran Nassau's program under the previous law.

He projected that Westchester could see a 35 percent drop in DWI arrests and a 26 percent drop in alcohol-related accidents. He said the Nassau program brought in \$1.1 million from auctioning off cars in 2002.

Legislators said reaping a profit is not the aim; safety is. But they
Please see FORFEITURE, 2B

The primary goal is to get the vehicle out of the hands of the person who drove it under the influence.

Christine Sullivan, Nassau deputy county attorney, on her county's DWI vehicle forfeiture law

SCHOOL LIFE | WESTCHESTER STUDENTS SPOTLIGHT THE EVERYDAY ON YOUTUBE



Matthew Brown/The Journal News

Charles Plummer, center, along with cast members, from left, Phylicia Green, Rana Huggins, Aaron Winn, Ivy Green and Britney Danae Webb gathered this month for a portrait in New Rochelle. Plummer directed and produced a Web series called "The Suburbs" that is broadcast via YouTube and has gathered a small following of viewers.

Teens tap reality in 'The Suburbs'

Stacy A. Anderson
The Journal News

NEW ROCHELLE — Cheating boyfriends, conflicting body images, friendship rifts and fleeting crushes may seem like plots on MTV's reality shows "Laguna Beach" and "The Hills," but the drama stirs just as thick in southern Westchester County.

Several teens from Mount Vernon and New Rochelle have been documenting their struggles and successes in an online video series they call "The Suburbs."

Charles Plummer, 16, of Mount Vernon began chronicling his adventures with his friends in the summer of 2007, after receiving a camcorder for his birthday.

Plummer, a reality series fanatic, said he drew some inspiration from the other young-people's reality shows.

"We have enough drama, so we decided we could do something like that," he said. "We figured we could do better than that."

Our lives are very interesting. Nothing is scripted. Sometimes we forget the camera is there.

Britney Danae Webb of Mount Vernon, a cast member of "The Suburbs"

The 10- to 15-minute "webisodes" have garnered a small following, with almost 70 subscribers on YouTube — with viewers as far away as Tennessee and California — and more than 100 friends on MySpace.

The first season of "The Suburbs," which began appearing on YouTube in January, chronicled the sophomore high school year for Plummer and six main cast members at Blessed Sacrament-

St. Gabriel's High School in New Rochelle.

Cast member Britney Danae Webb of Mount Vernon, whose Sweet 16 celebration was captured in one webisode, said the show is as real as it gets.

"Our lives are very interesting," she said. "Nothing is scripted. Sometimes we forget the camera is there."

Plummer added: "It's regular stuff that we go through, and we

catch it on camera."

New Rochelle has been a prominent backdrop in the first season and will continue to be because the teens spend much of their time in the city's public library, walking to shops along Main Street, chatting in front of the New Roc City entertainment complex and sipping coffee at Global Java.

Plummer's eclectic musical taste has found its way into the show, which has featured the bubble-gum pop of Britney Spears, hard-hitting beats of Kanye West and alternative riffs of Avril Lavigne.

"It's not, 'Oh, I like this song,'" he said. "The beat, lyrics, everything matches what's going on. We film it, and then I find a song that fits it perfectly."

Webisodes from the second season — set to post Oct. 10 — will follow Plummer, Webb and cast member Aaron Winn, 16, of Mount Vernon as they move to
Please see SUBURBS, 2B

On LoHud

■ For more on television, visit the "Remote Access" blog at www.remotelohudblogs.com.

■ What would sway you to allow your child to participate in a project like "The Suburbs"? Visit the "Open forum" at LoHud.com/forums/.



Poll shows McCain on rise in N.Y.

Siena College survey indicates Obama's blue-state lead shrinks

Joseph Spector
Albany Bureau

Republican presidential candidate John McCain is down only 5 percentage points to Democratic candidate Barack Obama in New York, as Obama's lead in the heavily blue state continues to decline, a Siena College poll showed yesterday.

With just seven weeks until Election Day, Obama leads McCain 46 percent to 41 percent among likely voters. McCain's pick of vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin has aided Obama's steady decline in New York, the Siena poll found. Obama led by 8 percentage points in August, 13 points in July and 18 points in June, when he led 51 percent to 33 percent.

In upstate New York, McCain holds a 45 percent to 40 percent lead over Obama, while in the New York City suburbs, he held a larger 49 percent to 39 percent advantage, yesterday's poll showed. Obama has a 54 percent to 34 percent edge in heavily Democratic New York City.

For New York to suddenly be competitive could signal real trouble for Obama's presidential chances as New York has long voted for Democratic candidates. Ronald Reagan in 1984 was the last Republican presidential candidate to win New York.

"As voters begin to focus on the race, New York's overwhelming Democratic enrollment advantage is not reflected in how voters tell Siena they plan to
Please see POLL, 2B

On LoHud

Join the discussion on the presidential race in the "White House '08" forum at LoHud.com/forums/.



\$400G staff stays after study ends

Jay Gallagher
Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Even though a study produced by a state panel earlier this year was finished more than four months ago, its staff — with a \$400,000 payroll — is still being paid by taxpayers, state documents show.

The Assembly Republican leader is demanding a probe of the continuing funding of the commission.

The state Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness, chaired by former Lt. Gov. Stan Lundine, issued a report April 30 about ways to cut the costs of local government.

While some minor parts of the report, including more grants for local governments considering mergers, were adopted, most of the big-ticket items recommended by the panel, including having public workers pay more for their health insurance, giving newly hired workers lower pension benefits than those currently employed and allowing school districts to band together to negotiate with teacher unions, went nowhere.

But the four-member professional staff is still on the job. When told about the situation, Assembly Mi-
Please see PANEL, 2B

On LoHud

For more information on state politics, visit the "Albany Watch" blog at www.statepolitics.lohudblogs.com



Vigilante neighbors save N.Y. from doggy do

The moon was full. What other explanation could there be for what happened that night?

Accompanied by my dog, I had ventured over the parkway bridge from Yonkers and into Bronxville, the enclave we, of the fourth-largest city in the state, affectionately call "Tiny Town."

When we reached a certain divide in the road, I heard a voice frantically calling out in the darkness. Turning, I saw that it belonged to a woman, who was running full throttle across the street and waving a flashlight.

She demanded: "DID YOU CLEAN UP AFTER HIM?"

"There's nothing to clean up," I replied, testily. "What are you talk-



Phil Reisman

ing about? And it's 'she,' not 'him.'"

The woman ignored my answer. Continuing her accusatory rant, she shouted: "I just cleaned up after him in front my house! You have to clean up after your dog!"

Then she pointed her flashlight to the ground in search of incriminating evidence. I began to think

that the poor woman had lost her mind. Of course, there was no deprecation of the canine variety to be found anywhere. After nearly 10 years of dog ownership, I was fully aware of my civic responsibilities, especially along that particular stretch of sidewalk where there is a prominently placed sign warning about dog waste and the fine that can come as a result of failing to clean it up.

But lack of proof hardly stopped the poop vigilante. Her lecture got increasingly shrill.

This capped a really bad day, and my sense of humor wasn't up to the task of laughing off a flashlight-toting kook intent on interrogating me on the bathroom habits

of my dog, who, truth be told, has enough problems as it is. Angered by the irrational unfairness of it all, I indelicately suggested she was insane.

Adding to my frustration, my dog acted like she was guilty of the crime! She got down on her haunches and began crawling toward the woman in a subservient, apologetic manner. I couldn't believe it. "Stop that!" I yelled, pulling on the leash.

Somewhere in all the shouting, the woman threatened to call the police.

Go ahead, I said, among other choice words.

Well, nothing came of it. Later,
Please see REISMAN, 2B



Ossining fire displaces residents

Ossining's fire chief uses a thermal imaging camera to check for hot spots at a fire on the third floor of 13 Aqueeduct St. in Ossining. Yesterday afternoon's blaze displaced several residents. No one was injured. The fire was under investigation, said Peter Connolly, first assistant fire chief. About 40 firefighters from Ossining and Croton-on-Hudson responded.

Frank Becerra Jr.
The Journal News