Independent Commission will objectively draw Council District lines

Farmingville, NY - At a public hearing during the March 29th Town Board meeting, the Town Board voted unanimously to establish Supervisor Mark Lesko's bipartisan Redistricting Commission - a first for the Town of Brookhaven. The Town Council boundaries were established 10 years ago and the Redistricting Commission will analyze census data to determine the new lines. Supervisor Lesko called for the bipartisan Redistricting Commission in his State of the Town address.

"I am proud that tonight we have proactively created a fair and equitable plan for redrawing Council District lines. The bipartisan Redistricting Commission will prohibit political party bosses from participating in redistricting and ensure all residents have equal representation," said Supervisor Mark Lesko.

Nancy Marr, President of the League of Women Voters of Brookhaven said, "Reformers have long argued that the method by which we draw voting district lines is undemocratic and in need of reform. The League of Women Voters of Brookhaven supports the decision of the Town of Brookhaven to create an independent redistricting commission to create council districts that will adhere to the principal of "one person, one vote" with compact, contiguous districts that respect communities of interest and all Constitutional and Voting Rights Act requirements. The council districts should reflect the interests of the general public, not political parties and legislative incumbents. The need for transparency dictates that the public should have the opportunity to participate with full access to data, maps, criteria and the proposed plans."

Before the Redistricting law was enacted, there was no codified process for redrawing Council District lines. This is the first time the Town will use a bipartisan commission to redraw its lines, which will take the politics out of the process and ensure that the reapportionment will provide for an equal weight in vote for each Council District.

Supervisor Lesko's Bipartisan Redistricting Commission will be comprised of eight members, including:

- Three democrats
- Three Republicans
- Two at-large members from the minor parties

Each major party must appoint at least one person from an established voter rights or civic organization and one person from an established minority organization.

Leadership from political parties will be prohibited from participating in the process, specifically:

- Anyone who has served as an elected official at any level since 2007
- Anyone who has held a party office above that of committee person since 2007
- Any relatives of current elected officials of the Town
- Anyone in a party leadership position

The next step is for the Town Board to appoint the members of the Commission. According to the new law, the Commission's redistricting plan must be submitted to the Town by September 15, 2012. Commission members will analyze census statistics to determine if and how the lines should be redrawn. A supermajority of the Commission - six out of eight members - must approve the redistricting plan in order for it to be considered by the Town Board. The Town Board must act upon the proposal by December 15, 2012.

The Town is required to re-evaluate Council District lines every ten years in accordance with the U.S. census. For more information about the Town of Brookhaven or to see the current Brookhaven Town Council district maps, please visit www.brookhaven.org.

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