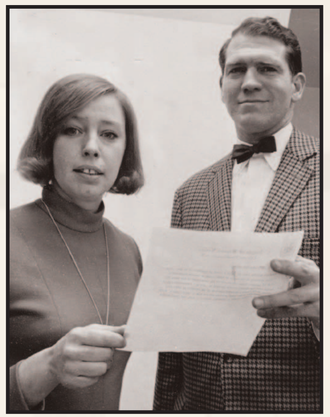
The Charter of 1967 | Designing the New Legislature

The county's post-World War II population boom, along with changes in industry, generated a challenge of representation. Community expansion was unequal throughout the county, with towns and cities in western Dutchess growing at a markedly higher rate than those in the east. The board of supervisors model, granting one voice to each community, was increasingly out of touch with the county's needs as a whole. A 1950 state assembly act granting county governments the power to pass local laws added further pressure for reform. The Charter of 1967 addressed the representation problem by creating a legislative body, known as the Dutchess County Board of Representatives, to replace the board of supervisors. The representatives were elected separately from the supervisors, using new districts that better reflected Dutchess' population distribution. Without responsibilities as municipal administrators, the representatives were primed to focus on their roles in the new policy-making branch of County Government.



Mrs. Edwin T. Blake

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

Mrs. Edwin T. (Ann) Blake from the Greater Poughkeepsie League of Women Voters joined the Charter Commssion in June 1966. Holding a BA from Smith College and a MA from Vassar, Mrs. Blake chaired the League's County Charter and Reapportionment Committee. She is seen here in December 1969 receiving a letter of commendation from Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr.

The Topic Was Government

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

Following the adoption of the charter in April 1967, the board of supervisors turned to drafting an administrative code outlining the daily operations of the new governmental structure. The board retained the firm of C. W. Robinson Inc. to aid in the process. Seen here in the large caucus room of the county office building were the key members of the work group (l-r): Elting Burger Sr., clerk of the board of supervisors; Donald Spanier, vice president of C. W. Robinson Inc.; David C. Schoentag, chairman of the board of supervisors; and Dr. Jack I. Lippman, chairman of the Charter Commission.

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Dutchess Charter Lists Officials' Duties

Vote Set On April 17

To give the proposed Dutchess County Charter the widest possible circulation the Poughkeepsie Journal publishes the complete text of the proposed charter in the following article. Readers are urged to study the charter and to vote on it April 17.

ARTICLE I. Short Title, Purpose and Definitions

Section 1.1. Short title. This charter may be cited as the "Dutchess County Charter."

Section 1.2. Purpose. The purpose of this charter is to provide for the government of Dutchess County in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the State of New York and the Municipal Home Rule Law.

Section 1.3. Definitions. Unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms when used in this charter shall have the following meanings:

(1) "County" means the County of Dutchess.

(2) "Board" means the Board of Representatives.

(3) "Chairman" means the Chairman of the Board of Representatives.

(4) "Clerk" means the Clerk of the Board of Representatives.

(5) "Legislative" means the legislative powers of the County.

(6) "Local law" means a local law of the County.

(7) "Resolution" means a resolution of the County.

(8) "Ordinance" means an ordinance of the County.

(9) "Rule" means a rule of the County.

(10) "Administrative" means the administrative powers of the County.

(11) "Executive" means the executive powers of the County.

(12) "Elective" means the elective powers of the County.

(13) "Appointive" means the appointive powers of the County.

(14) "Ministerial" means the ministerial powers of the County.

(15) "Discretionary" means the discretionary powers of the County.

(16) "Department" means a department of the County.

(17) "Agency" means an agency of the County.

(18) "Bureau" means a bureau of the County.

(19) "Division" means a division of the County.

(20) "Office" means an office of the County.

(21) "Commission" means a commission of the County.

(22) "Board" means a board of the County.

(23) "Committee" means a committee of the County.

(24) "Officer" means an officer of the County.

(25) "Employee" means an employee of the County.

(26) "Person" means a person.

(27) "Oath" means an oath.

(28) "Affirmation" means an affirmation.

(29) "Oath of office" means an oath of office.

(30) "Affirmation of office" means an affirmation of office.

(31) "Oath of allegiance" means an oath of allegiance.

(32) "Affirmation of allegiance" means an affirmation of allegiance.

(33) "Oath of office and allegiance" means an oath of office and allegiance.

(34) "Affirmation of office and allegiance" means an affirmation of office and allegiance.

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Confirming the County Charter

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

On March 12, 1967, the *Poughkeepsie Journal* published the proposed county charter to provide residents with the opportunity to examine its key provisions ahead of the April 17, 1967, referendum. For the charter to pass, it had to receive a majority vote in two key blocks: the 20 towns and the two cities of Poughkeepsie and Beacon. While the charter failed to gain major ground in the former, support from city residents guaranteed its passage.

The Spirit of Christmas

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

A holiday gathering at Michael's Restaurant in Hyde Park on December 30, 1970, showcased the cordial relations between the executive and legislative branches of county government under the new charter. Seen here (l-r) were Chairman of the Board of Representatives George Reid, County Executive David C. Schoentag, Republican Majority Leader Earl T. Bruno, and Democratic Minority Leader Jack Economou. All four had worked together as members of the Board of Supervisors and preserved those relationships in their new roles.

Chairman George Reid, 1968-1974

Courtesy of the Poughkeepsie Journal

Seen here after his re-election as chairman on January 7, 1970, George Reid was the first chairman of the board of representatives, serving through 1974. Like County Executive Schoentag, Reid had been a member of the board of supervisors and provided an experienced hand at the tiller as the new legislature explored how the charter's provisions worked in practice.