

# **PORT CHESTER VOTES**

**A BASIC REVIEW OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT, *U.S. v. PORT CHESTER*, AND THE SELECTION OF A  
NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN OUR VILLAGE**

**PRESENTED BY**

**SUSTAINABLE PORT CHESTER ALLIANCE**

**HUDSON VALLEY JUSTICE CENTER**

# **SUSTAINABLE PORT CHESTER ALLIANCE**

**The Sustainable Port Chester Alliance is a coalition of faith, civic and labor organizations, and community members, committed to building the power to secure responsible development, affordable housing, jobs, and to safeguard human and civil rights in Port Chester.**



# **HUDSON VALLEY JUSTICE CENTER**

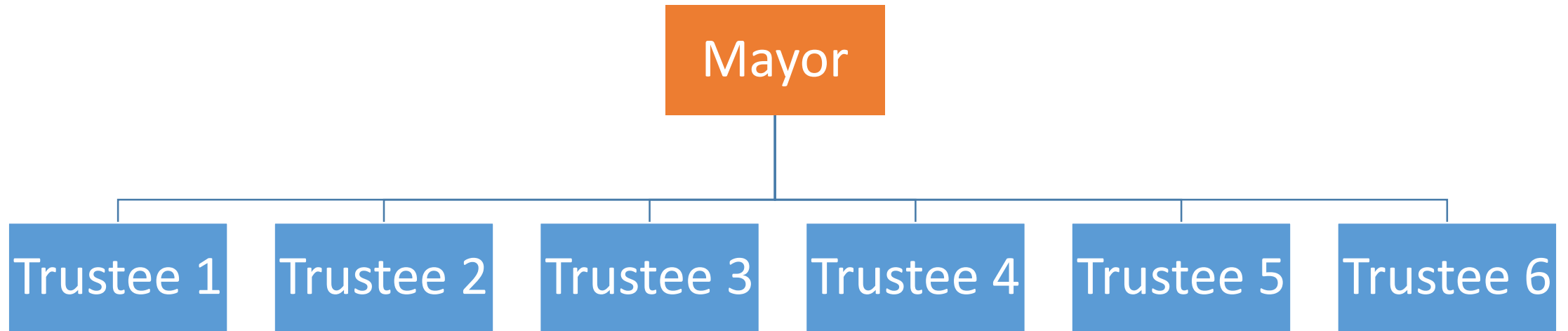
- **The Hudson Valley Justice Center (HVJC) is a non-profit law office. Our mission is to advance social and economic justice in the lower and mid-Hudson Valley.**
- **We partner with community groups to identify unmet needs and provide free legal assistance to support collective movements for change.**



# **KEY QUESTIONS**

- **Who controls Port Chester government?**
- **Why does it matter?**
- **What happened when the federal government sued Port Chester?**
- **How can we make our local government work better?**

# WHO CONTROLS PORT CHESTER GOVERNMENT?



# WHO CONTROLS PORT CHESTER GOVERNMENT?



# **WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

## **Powers of Local Government**

- **Housing**
- **Employment**
- **Transportation**
- **Public safety and policing**
- **Business development**
- **Property taxes**

# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

**Our local government  
should reflect and  
respond to  
our local community.**





# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

## Port Chester is:

- **47% female**
- **63.5% Hispanic**
- **45% foreign born**
- **28.5% non-Hispanic white**

# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

## Starwood Example:



# **WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

## **Starwood Example:**

- **Development of luxury condos approved by Board of Trustees**
- **Board required very little affordable housing to be built**
- **Board did NOT require the developer to hire local residents**
- **Board gave special treatment (tax benefits) to the developer**
- **Board did NOT get anything in exchange for most people who live in Port Chester**

# WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUED PORT CHESTER?

- **The Voting Rights Act of 1965 guarantees that no person shall be denied the right to vote on account of race or color.**



# **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUED PORT CHESTER?**

**2 ways Voting Rights Act can be violated:**

- 1. Denying minorities the right to vote**
- 2. Having a voting system that dilutes the votes of minority voters**

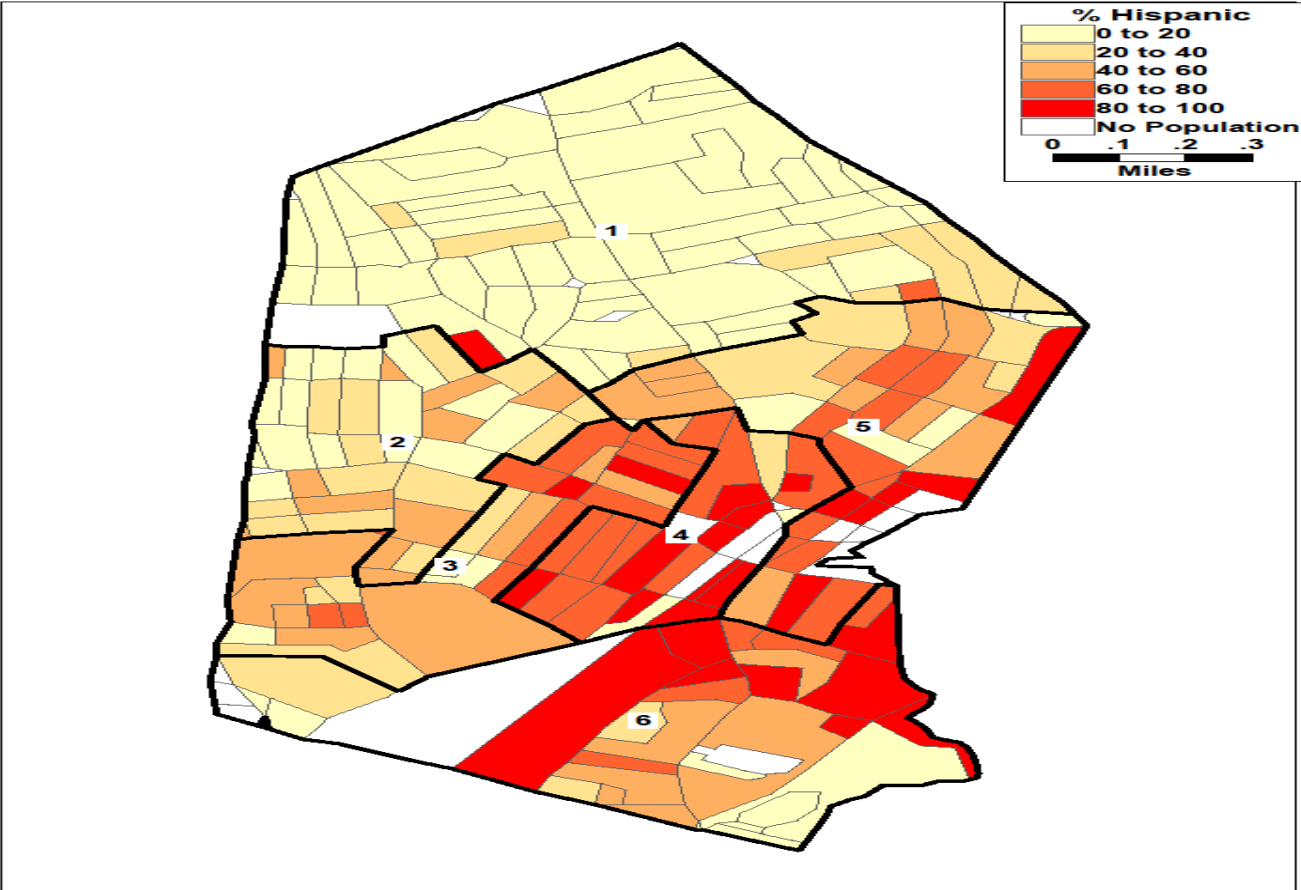
# **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUED PORT CHESTER?**

- **Court found that the at-large voting system used to elect the Board of Trustees denied the Hispanic population equal opportunity to participate in the political process.**
- **In effect, the votes from the Hispanic population did not count.**

# WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUED PORT CHESTER?

Case 1:06-cv-15173-PGG Document 5-1 Filed 12/18/06 Page 1 of 1

**Exhibit A -- Proposed District Plan and Hispanic Concentration in Port Chester. (2000 Census Data)**



# **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUED PORT CHESTER?**

## **The court found:**

- **Hispanic population could be a majority in a single-member district;**
- **Hispanic population was politically cohesive and voted as a bloc;**
- **White majority voted to defeat the Hispanic minority's preferred candidate;**
- **Other Facts:**
  - **History of discrimination in Westchester County**
  - **Treatment of Hispanic voters at the polls**
  - **Racial appeals during campaign**



# **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUED PORT CHESTER?**

- **Court ordered an at-large, cumulative voting scheme with the elimination of staggered terms.**
  - **Each voter got 6 votes and could allocate them however he or she chose.**
- **Remedy lasted for 10 years but has now expired.**
- **A NEW SYSTEM MUST BE IN PLACE FOR THE 2019 ELECTION!**

# **HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER?**

- **Select a voting system that works better for our community**
  - **Cumulative voting?**
  - **Single-member district voting?**
  - **At-large voting?**
  - **Hybrid system?**
- **Run for Board of Trustees**
- **Campaign for the candidate you like**
- **Vote**
- **Get involved and stay involved!**

# **HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER?**

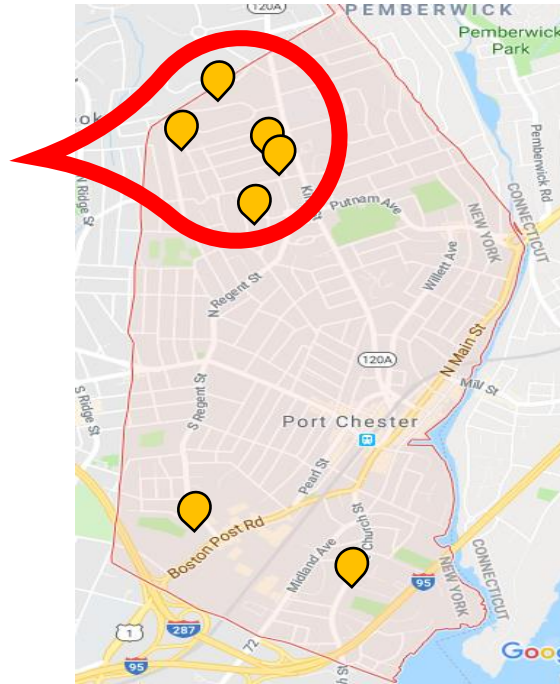
- **Board of Trustees has hired an Election Expert**
- **Board of Trustees will adopt a resolution providing for a new electoral system**
- **The resolution will be subject to a referendum – all voters in Port Chester get to vote “yes” or “no”**



# Port Chester Elections Affect All of Our Lives. Join Us to Make Sure They are Fair!

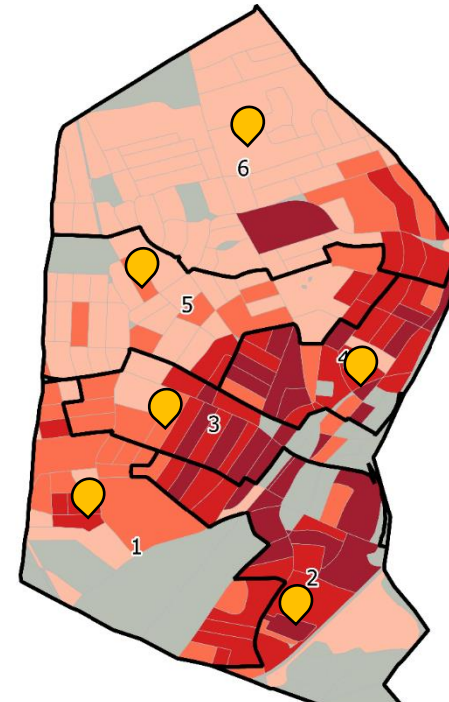
## **OUR CURRENT** **UNFAIR SYSTEM:**

5 of 7 BDT  
members live  
in the  
wealthiest  
neighborhood



## **THE FAIR SYSTEM** **WE CAN WIN:**

Equal  
representation  
throughout the  
Village, so that  
ALL of us have  
Equal Say



The Board of Trustees make decisions that affect all of our lives. They govern housing, taxes, jobs, transportation, development, policing and more. Shouldn't all areas of Port Chester have representation on the Board?

**District voting will ensure that your vote matters and Trustees represent ALL OF US!**

Learn more at [www.PortChesterAlliance.org/VotePortChester](http://www.PortChesterAlliance.org/VotePortChester)