

City of Newburgh

Press Release

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For immediate release

January 29, 2010

City of Newburgh Names Bernis E. Nelson as Corporation Counsel

On January 25, 2010, at the City Council meeting, Acting City Manager Richard Herbek announced his appointment of Bernis Elizabeth Nelson to serve as Corporation Counsel for the City of Newburgh starting February 1.



Mr. Herbek stated, “We are very fortunate to have Bernis join us. Her experience in municipal and development law makes her especially qualified for this position especially at this time in the City’s history when, although poised for success in our revitalization efforts, we face economic and other challenges that impede our progress. We look forward to working with her to find creative solutions to the City’s unique issues.”

Ms. Nelson’s responsibilities will include management of the City’s Law Department and outside counsel; serving as legal counsel to the City Council, City Manager, and City department heads; and providing legal assistance in the redevelopment of the City.

Ms. Nelson, who grew up in Cornwall and graduated from Washingtonville High School as Class Honor Speaker in 1969, has stated that “she is deeply appreciative of the opportunity to return to her roots and to fully participate in the economic revitalization of Newburgh.” Her parents, Bettison and Avahlee Shapiro, founded the museum now known as the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum in Cornwall in 1959.

From July 2009 through January 2010, Ms. Nelson served as Of Counsel to the law firm of Silverberg Zalantis LLP in Tarrytown, where she worked on complex land use and development matters.

From February 1997 through June 2009, she served as Corporation Counsel of the City of New Rochelle. She handled much of the development counsel work for New Rochelle, negotiating and preparing the land disposition and other agreements for the major New Roc City, Municipal Garage, New Roc Air Rights, Avalon, and Trump Plaza redevelopment projects which have brought 1300 new market-rate dwelling units; 700,000 square feet of new retail, commercial, and hotel space; and a new 2300 parking space garage to downtown New Rochelle. Mayor Noam Bramson of New Rochelle stated in his July 2009 proclamation honoring Ms. Nelson that she “has exhibited the intellect, attention to detail, work ethic, and strength of will that are illustrative of great legal counsel.”

She started her legal career with the City of Peekskill from 1980 to 1987 where she worked on the major HUD and IDA-assisted industrial, commercial, and residential redevelopment projects which ultimately brought 2000 new market-rate dwelling units and more than 500 new industrial and commercial jobs to Peekskill. Mayor Richard Jackson of Peekskill stated in his August 1987 proclamation honoring Ms. Nelson that she “is a person of perception, quick mind and impeccable high standards, treating all persons with equality.”

She additionally served in the private sector from 1987 to 1997, during which period she was District Counsel to the Montrose Water Improvement District where she was instrumental in the formation of the Northern Westchester Joint Water Works.

Ms. Nelson is an active member of the Municipal Law Section of the New York State Bar Association. She graduated from New York Law School where she gained her interest in municipal law under the inspiration of Bernard Richland, former Corporation Counsel of the City of New York. Her undergraduate degree is from Barnard College, Columbia University where she concentrated in Chinese politics and language. Prior to law school, she worked and studied in Japan. She and her husband, Charles R. (“Dick”) Nelson, have two children and three grandchildren.