



Chairman of the Board  
& Legislator, District 5  
**BEN BOYKIN**  
*Addressing the Needs of District 5*



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## Protecting Our Seniors: Affordable Housing Plans Approved for White Plains

Affordable housing, especially for Westchester's seniors, is one of the county's critical needs. That's why I'm proud to say a 56-unit development that will create affordable housing for seniors is moving forward after the Board unanimously approved the county's acquisition of land in White Plains for the Mount Hope Plaza project.

Mount Hope Plaza, at 65 Lake Street in White Plains, will create affordable housing units for seniors 62 years and older.

The County, the City of White Plains and Mt. Hope AME Zion Church – which currently owns the site -- have worked cooperatively for many years with community members and housing advocates in planning the development. The partnership illustrates the results we can deliver for the people of Westchester when we all work together for a common goal. ■



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# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall 2018 Newsletter

## Chairman Ben Boykin

Legislator, District 5 ~ White Plains, Scarsdale, Harrison

### Stabilizing the County's Finances

The Board of Legislators will face difficult and consequential decisions this fall in considering the county's 2019 operating budget.

The county ended 2017 with a \$32.3 million deficit and at mid-year faced a 2018 deficit of around \$18 million.

After seven years of working without a contract, the CSEA contract has been ratified by the union, approved by the Board of Legislators and signed by County Executive Latimer. This ten year \$100 million contract through the end of 2021 will cost the County \$34 million for retroactive pay that will be paid from our fund balance.

This is not a situation that was created overnight.

The former county executive submitted budgets that he balanced with one-shot revenues and by borrowing to pay for short-term operating expenses.

I voted against those budgets and repeatedly warned of the looming problems presented by structural imbalances. Now the day of reckoning is at hand.

It will take time to stabilize our finances and rebuild our fund balance, but with a new majority and new leadership on the Board -- and working with a new County Executive -- our mission is to stabilize and improve the county's fiscal condition while holding fast to our values and improving the quality of life for residents. It's our duty to leave Westchester better tomorrow than we find it today. ■

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's been a time of significant accomplishments for the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

As the newly elected Board Chairman, I'm proud to say that working together and with a new County Executive, the representatives you elected are getting things done to enhance the quality of life for residents in the county we love.

We're tackling the county's fiscal challenges as we work through next year's budget plans. We'll have hard choices to make, but we'll make those choices guided by our values.

Those same values have guided the legislation we've already passed and the other initiatives we've undertaken this year. These include:

- Banning gun shows on county-owned property
- Protecting workers by ending questions about prior salary history in hiring
- Ensuring that workers can earn sick time
- Increasing the age for the purchase of tobacco and vaping products to 21
- Demanding changes from power utilities to improve inadequate storm responses
- Funding improvements and repairs to county roads, bridges, parks, and facilities
- Approving purchase of new Bee-Line buses and Para-Transit vehicles with improved fuel efficiency
- Approving affordable housing developments
- Protecting our drinking water by bringing Water District #1 into compliance with federal standards – which saved taxpayers millions of dollars -- and releasing money for watershed protection

That's just the beginning of our work in this historic term in which you have elected the most diverse board in county history – with more African Americans and people of color than ever before and with the Board's first female majority.

Over the years that I have proudly represented District 5, I've spoken with many of you at events in White Plains, Scarsdale, West Harrison and throughout Westchester County. That's an opportunity I always cherish. So please continue to reach out on any issues that are important to you, so we can make Westchester a better place to live, work and enjoy.

Sincerely,

*Ben Boykin*



## Improving Our Transportation System



The county's Bee-Line bus service is the backbone of our transit system and a crucial life-line for Westchester residents. I'm happy to report that the county has negotiated a new contract with Liberty Lines, the private company that operates the system. Under the terms of the new deal, the county expects to save around \$20 million over the five-year life of the contract. The deal preserves this important resource and protects around 700 local jobs.

The Board also approved the replacement of all of the nearly 80 articulated Bee-Line buses. The replacements will be diesel/electric hybrids with double the fuel efficiency of the older buses. That will save us money and be good for the environment.

We also approved the replacement of many of our Para-Transit vehicles which service seniors and individuals with disabilities. These new vehicles also will be more fuel efficient. ■

## Holding Utilities Accountable for Poor Storm Response

Earlier this year, violent storms ripped through the county leaving thousands of residents without power, many for a week or more each time. The poor response by Consolidated Edison (Con Ed) and New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG) dramatically revealed flaws in the companies' communications with customers, coordination with local authorities and reliance on help from utilities across the country after storms hit.

At the Board of Legislators we've been working hard to hold the utilities accountable for their actions. We convened three separate meetings with representatives from the companies to examine the flaws in the system. The Board has urged the state's Public Service Commission to levy harsh fines against the utilities and to examine the broken system of relying on aid from far-away utilities to repair storm damage. The way utility companies presently handle calling in help, leads to days of downtime before restoration work begins. ■



## Protecting Our Children's Health: Tobacco 21

Protecting the health and welfare of residents is one of county government's most important functions, and we took a big step when we raised the age for the sale of tobacco and related products from 18 to 21.

This bipartisan measure, which passed with a vote of 16-1, applies to the sale of both tobacco and vaping products in Westchester.

We heard moving testimony from many young people about the explosive growth in the use of high-nicotine vaping products among high schoolers and even middle schoolers. Raising the age not only protects 18 and 19 year-olds, but also protects middle schoolers who know 18 and 19 year-olds, since those older children will no longer be able to buy vaping or tobacco products for their younger acquaintances. ■



## Protecting Our Residents: Immigration Protection Act

I'm happy to say that I was able to join with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to pass the Immigration Protection Act to ensure the safety of all people living in our county.

The law sets ground rules for how county officials share information about county residents with federal immigration authorities.

With this law, everyone in the community, regardless of immigration status, can feel comfortable reaching out to county authorities, removing any trepidation immigrants may have about reaching out if they've been victims of crimes or if they know of crimes.

The law is NOT a "sanctuary" law and does NOT hamper federal investigations of violent crimes. In fact, it requires county officials to cooperate with federal authorities in such investigations. It complies with all state and federal laws and has the support of the County Departments of Public Safety, Corrections and Probation, who know that this law will protect the safety of county residents. ■



## Caring for Our Veterans

Few things are more important than assisting those who have served us. That's why we passed a law encouraging the use of New York State-certified, service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in county contracts.

I'm also happy to see the County pushing forward with plans for a special veterans' treatment court. Such a court will help veterans caught up in the judicial system by providing peer mentoring, alternatives to incarceration and referral to a variety of services including treatment for post-traumatic stress, brain injury, mental illness, and substance abuse. ■

## Protecting Workers in Westchester County

With my colleagues on the Board, I've been pushing hard to protect workers.

**EARNED SICK LEAVE:** Coming to work sick means decreased productivity, a likelihood that illnesses will spread and increased stress from work-family conflict. Before this legislation, more than two thirds of people working at businesses in Westchester County lacked access to sick time.

Our legislation ensures access to sick time for workers. Under our measure, workers who had no sick time before can earn up to 40 hours of sick leave per year.



**SALARY HISTORY QUESTIONS BANNED IN HIRING:** Women and people of color often start their careers making less than other job seekers, and when future wages are tied to past salaries, the gap becomes institutionalized.

To promote hiring equity and combat persistent gender and race-based wage gaps, this year we banned questions about an applicant's prior salary during the hiring process.

Employers in Westchester can no longer ask about prior income when interviewing or deciding to interview a job seeker, or when setting the wages they're willing to offer.

The law also protects people who may have been laid off from higher-paying jobs and may now be seeking lower-paying work as well as people returning to the job market after a hiatus. ■

## Can You Help Us Solve the Mystery of Lady Justice?

Since 1847, the official seal of the County of Westchester has been the figure of Justice. We recently discovered that a painting which hangs in the Chairman's office at the Board of Legislators, may have been the work of Edmund F. Ward, a County Supervisor between 1953 and 1965. Ward was a well-known artist and prominent local figure who resided in White Plains. In an article published in The Reporter Dispatch on September 21, 1959,



the painting is referenced as "One large drawing hangs in the office of the clerk of the Board of Supervisors." The article talks about a possible redesign of the seal and says that County Executive Edwin G. Michaelian asked Supervisor Ward to come up with some suggestions.

Our best guess is that the painting was executed by Ward. If you have any information, please contact Lucy Ortiz at [LuciaO@westchesterlegislators.com](mailto:LuciaO@westchesterlegislators.com) or (914) 995-2818.

## PHOTO GALLERY

