



Westchester County Legislator
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Progress on Affordable Housing Settlement

The terms outlined in the 2009 Affordable Housing Settlement continue to be dutifully fulfilled by the Astorino administration. The requirement to build 750 units is currently ahead of schedule. While the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has looked to go beyond the “four corners” of the original agreement, both the county executive and I have remained steadfast in opposition to any federal government overreach. HUD’s claim that Westchester’s zoning is discriminatory, is simply baseless, as has been concluded by third-party, non-partisan professionals. HUD’s “grand experiment” to dismantle local zoning would potentially create a situation where high-rise, high-density structures could be built in absolutely any neighborhood. Rest assured, County Executive Astorino and I will continue to work tirelessly to protect our local communities by ensuring that the federal government does not irresponsibly overreach on the original settlement terms.

Animal Abuse Registry

Late last year, the Board of Legislators approved legislation to establish an animal abuse registry in the County to effectively “speak up for those who cannot.” The registry database will consist of a list of animal abusers so as to ensure that they do not have access to another pet. In addition, the evidence linking animal abuse to domestic violence was quite remarkable, and it is my hope that such a registry will significantly curtail abuse of any kind.

Smith supported the passage of an Animal Abuse Registry in Westchester. ►



Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2013 Newsletter



Michael J. Smith

District 3 ~ Mount Pleasant, Pleasantville, North Castle, Valhalla, Hawthorne, Thornwood, Sleepy Hollow, Briarcliff Manor



Bipartisan 2013 Budget Passed with No Tax Increase

Dear Neighbor,

I am pleased to report that the 2013 budget has been approved by the Board of Legislators and signed into law by County Executive Robert P. Astorino. For the third consecutive year, the county portion of your property taxes will carry a zero-percent tax increase.

The finalized budget was ultimately a compromise between both political parties and both branches of government. No one party, individual, or branch of government received all of their initial requests. The final result was a responsible and balanced coalition spending plan.

Unfortunately, when it came time to vote on the budget bill itself, eight legislators decided to walk out of the Board’s chambers, refusing to compromise; however, two courageous Democrats chose to stay in the room, helping to finalize the plan. In the end, the 2013 budget is still able to provide residents with an optimal number of services, many of which County taxpayers have rightfully come to expect, in a most responsible way. Going into negotiations, I never wavered from my belief that both raising taxes and irresponsibly raiding reserve funds were non-negotiable. I am glad that the 2013 budget conforms to these two essential tenets.

The County continues to face ongoing fiscal challenges, such as the rising costs of unfunded state mandates, and the unsettled contract with the county’s largest union. Because of the latter issue in particular, some very difficult cuts had to be made, many of which could have been avoided had the CSEA union and the County been able to arrive at a mutually agreeable contract, particularly as it related to the rates for healthcare contributions.

For the 2014 budget, I believe layoffs can potentially be avoided if such an agreement is reached. Ideally, negotiations must take place now rather than during the upcoming election season. Overall, it is my hope that there will be an agreement in place which incorporates concepts similar to the contracts reached with four of the County’s other unions. The solution to these expired contracts can be achieved if we work together, as evidenced by the 2013 budget process.

As we approach the 2014 budget process in the coming months, I will again look to maintain essential services, such as in public safety, while joining County Executive Astorino in his pledge to not raise taxes for the fourth straight year. I encourage you to contact me via phone and/or email to let me know of any issues or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Smith

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2013 BUDGET INCLUDE:

- Subsidized day care will be funded at a 27% parent share, an 8% decrease from what had initially been proposed, yet slightly higher than last year’s budget.
- Critical services provided by the departments of Public Safety, Emergency Services, Probation, and the District Attorney’s Office, will all receive additional funding compared to initial estimates. The Parks Department saw the restoration of four positions. Three curators at nature preserves were retained, including at our own Cranberry Lake Preserve. Five engineering positions were also restored to the Department of Public Works. In all, the coalition budget restored 30 positions (25 filled and five vacant).
- ArtsWestchester, which continues to be an economic engine for our entire County, will receive \$1.25 million, \$500,000 more than initially proposed. Cornell Cooperative will receive \$800,000, or \$200,000 more than initially proposed.
- Funding was also added for three programs included in the County’s Office for Women related to Small Business Training, Domestic Violence Training, Human Trafficking, and Tot Drop. Community Capital Resources, a local District 3 organization dedicated to helping small businesses throughout the county, received restored funding, as did key senior citizen services for Elder Abuse Legal Services and training.



▲ Smith and the coalition team sign the 2013 budget with no tax increase.

Kensico Dam Walkway Reopened, Upgrades to Kensico Plaza

One of the things that contribute to our wonderful quality of life here in Westchester County is our outstanding parks system. As stewards of this county treasure, we must be diligent in the maintenance and repairs of our parks facilities, while ensuring that every taxpayer dollar is spent wisely. The Kensico Dam is a great attraction for people across Westchester and beyond, and we are lucky to have such a prized possession in our district. The Dam is especially important for the Westchester community as it is the location for many cultural events, ethnic festivals, our traditional July 4th fireworks, and the September 11, 2001 memorial, 'The Rising.'

Earlier last year, I was joined by Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino, North Castle Town Supervisor Howard Arden, Mount Pleasant Town Supervisor Joan Maybury, and members of the New York

City Department of Environmental Protection, in re-opening the top portion of the Kensico Dam to pedestrians and bicyclists. The span had been closed for nearly seven years, and over that time period, numerous infrastructural improvements were made to ensure that the Dam is safer and more structurally sound. In order to maintain, secure, and increase the attractiveness of the Dam, later in the year, I was joined by my fellow Legislators in the approval of a \$462,000 Capital Budget Amendment (CBA) to fund a number of much-needed improvements and additions to the electrical and communications systems at the Dam. The CBA is part of a \$3,262,000 funding package that will rehabilitate the electrical infrastructure throughout the County-owned park. Among the improvements that will be made is a complete replacement of the lighting and security systems, including: new security cameras,



▲ A view from atop the Kensico Dam.

pedestrian pathway lights, security lights illuminating the Dam, and new security lights in the plaza itself. In addition to the upgraded lighting and security, the primary electrical service and transformer will be relocated, and secondary power distribution will be installed. The overall project will also include the installation of antennas that will be mounted on the park office building and on light poles, which will provide free wireless internet service for park patrons in the northern part of the plaza and in the picnic area.

It is my hope that these new and enhanced features will attract even more residents from throughout our area to enjoy the Dam and all it has to offer, thereby supporting our local businesses in the process. This important capital project will help in this effort.



Smith joins in re-opening the top portion of the Kensico Dam.

Work In Committees

I am a member of several committees of the Board, including: Government Operations, Budget and Appropriations, Community Services, Government Reform, Efficiency & Savings, and the Sub-Committee on Septic. My professional background is primarily in business, as I am the

chief financial officer of a local business that employs 1,500 associates, as well as being a certified public accountant, and chartered financial analyst. I am glad to serve on these committees in order to advocate for a smarter County government, particularly as it relates to the fi-

nances of the County. I have also maintained an open-door policy with residents and local officials alike, working on projects ranging from the future of the iconic Miller House in North Castle, to the opportunities that exist for Kingsland Point Park in Sleepy Hollow.

Community Events

By far, the best part of being the legislator for our district has been speaking with the many thoughtful people of our community. I have met many of you at festivals, award presentations, parades, school functions, Eagle Scout presentations, senior centers, mock legislatures, veteran ceremonies, and other events. It is nice being able to welcome

new businesses to our community too, such as The Westchester Bank to the Thornwood Town Center, and Trattoria 160 restaurant to Pleasantville. I was also proud to be a part of the ceremonial ribbon-cutting of the new Pleasantville recreation center on Marble Avenue. Honoring those who have dedicated their time and resources to our community is

something that always invigorates me. I routinely upload pictures from many of these events on my Facebook page.

This newsletter provides only a quick glimpse into many of the initiatives we have undertaken thus far. I encourage you to stay in touch with me via social media as well. Find all my links at: www.westchesterlegislators.com/district-3.



1 Smith celebrates Hawthorne Elementary School's annual "Walk the Green Walk" event. 2 Smith and County Executive Astorino honoring the State Championship of the Sherman Park Little League Team. 3 Smith speaking with residents during a local parade. 4 Smith joins other local elected officials in calling for unfunded state-mandate relief. 5 Smith honors Kensico Little League with a proclamation from the Board of Legislators. 6 Smith and County Executive Astorino visit a senior center.