



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



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# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

*Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years*

Fall 2021 Newsletter



## Chairman Ben Boykin

Legislator, District 5 ~ White Plains, Scarsdale, Harrison

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

After being at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are bouncing back. Our vaccination numbers are increasing and people are getting back to work and school. But we cannot let our guard down. COVID-19 is still with us. The threat from variants like the Delta is real and substantial, especially to our young and vulnerable populations. We must continue to increase our vaccination rates and implement booster vaccination programs when they are indicated. We must be vigilant about wearing masks and other practices that minimize the risk of transmission.

During the COVID crisis, people turn to government for guidance and assistance. It was gratifying for me to be out and about in our district to help distribute food and PPE to our residents in need. I'm proud to say, from the leadership of County Executive George Latimer, to the dedication of our County's workers, to the Board's unstinting commitment to continuing the work necessary to provide services, we have responded to you.

There is important work to be done in the coming months. People are still struggling with lingering economic, mental and physical health, and housing impacts from the pandemic. Food insecurity remains a pressing concern. And the pandemic exposed gaps in broadband infrastructure and access that must be closed to ensure that a generation



With new Gov. Kathy Hochul at White Plains High School vaccination pop-up

that can allow working families to continue to afford to live in Westchester and keep seniors in their communities. We've put programs and policies in place to make Westchester more sustainable by reducing waste and making our buildings and transportation more energy efficient. The investments we have made in the Board's technology allowed us to continue the work of County government throughout the pandemic without disruption, and have helped make your government more accessible and transparent.

Working together, this County government has risen to the occasion to keep the residents of Westchester safe, to buoy the County's financial health, and to provide for the people of Westchester at a time when government services have never been more essential. As Chair of the Board I'm proud of the work I and my legislative colleagues have done, but it wouldn't be possible without the creativity and dedication of our outstanding staff, and I thank them for their service.

As always, I welcome hearing from the people of White Plains, Scarsdale, West Harrison and the entire County. Please continue to reach out to let me know how we can better serve the people of District 5 and our great County.

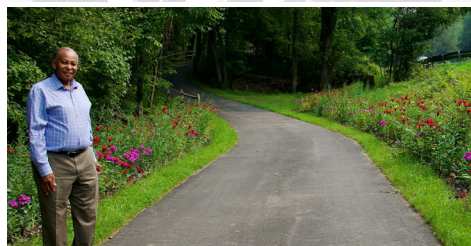
Sincerely,



Joining Congressman Mondaire Jones to Speak on Extending the Eviction Moratorium



Supporting Displaced Workers at White Plains Rally



New Trailway Between Scarsdale and Hartsdale



150th Anniversary of First Baptist Church in White Plains

### THE NUMBERS ARE IN: WESTCHESTER TOPS 1 MILLION RESIDENTS

The 2020 Census data released in August shows Westchester topping 1 million in population for the first time in our history, growing nearly 6% over the prior 10 years. This ensures our eligibility for billions of dollars in State and Federal funding allocated by population which is good for our schools, our roads, our hospitals, our fire departments, our youth programs and more. Thank you to the County's Complete Count Committee for your efforts, and to everyone who worked diligently to ensure the fullest counting possible of Westchester residents during the COVID pandemic. ■



## RENEWING AND EXPANDING COUNTY PARKS

Westchester County parks have been an essential refuge for us all during the COVID pandemic. At the Board, our commitment to caring for and improving our parks remains as strong as ever.

**BRONX RIVER PARKWAY RESERVATION TRAILWAY:** July saw the long-anticipated opening of the Bronx River Parkway Reservation Trailway between Scarsdale and Hartsdale. The 1.6-mile paved path rolls through the woods between the Scarsdale and Hartsdale train stations. With benches and tens of thousands of newly planted perennials and native trees, the trail has already become a fixture for local walkers, hikers and bikers. The trail is part of a contiguous trailway from Bronxville to the Kensico Dam, and extends greenways and open space through the heart of Westchester's communities.

**SENIOR EXERCISE STATIONS:** This year the Board approved an exciting new park project—special exercise equipment stations for seniors. These exercise stations

are specifically designed to help seniors stay flexible and fit, and have become very popular in Japan. They help keep seniors active and create new outdoor spaces where people can socialize safely at a time when indoor activities are challenging. The \$1-million project we approved will allow us to identify the proper equipment and park locations and begin installation.

**PLAYLAND SETTLEMENT:** After months of committee work, we approved a bankruptcy court settlement with Standard Amusements over the management of one of the crown jewels of our parks system—Playland. The settlement gives the County significantly improved terms over the County's 2016 agreement, including better financial terms, more oversight of Standard's work and operations at Playland, and requires more financial investment from the company. Standard will take over management of the park on December 1, 2021. ■



## STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT ETHICS

This year, we passed a major overhaul of the Westchester County ethics code, designed to make our rules for good governance stronger and more transparent.

The new regulations explicitly cover things like the use of County positions for personal gain, requirements related to contracts where employees might

have a material interest, prohibitions on inducements to making political contributions and more.

It also changes the way members of the Board of Ethics are appointed to ensure more equity. Under the prior code, all seven members were appointed by the County Executive. In the new code, five

will be appointed by the County Executive, and two will be appointed by the Chair of the Board of Legislators. This change to the Ethics Board appointments will be on the ballot this fall, starting with early voting from October 23-31, and at the general election on November 2, in the form of a public referendum. ■

## POLICE REFORM

After nearly a dozen public meetings, the Board voted unanimously in March to adopt the report of the County's Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force, establishing a road map for police reform in Westchester County.

The Task Force included public safety personnel, community leaders, members of the County Executive's staff and legislators. Its outstanding work was a model for how government officials and community members can work together to address complex issues.

We thoroughly examined the report's

50+ recommendations for the County police, correction and other public safety operations.

A number of the report's recommendations are already being implemented by the County's Public Safety Department. Others will require longer-term work by this Board, the Executive Branch and NY State government. This is the beginning of a generational process and reflects our continuing commitment to protecting the public, improving transparency, ensuring fairness and modernizing policing in Westchester. ■

## INCREASING TRANSPARENCY IN THE CO-OP MARKET

The Board voted this spring to strengthen the County's disclosure law for the buying and selling of co-operative real estate.

The new provisions require co-op boards to provide written notice of a reason for rejection when a prospective buyer's application is denied. The reason, along with the notice of rejection, will

have to be filed with the County's Human Rights Commission. The measure is similar to the one that has been in effect in Suffolk County since 2009.

The new law does not restrict authority to legally reject buyers. Co-ops have wide ranging discretion in their review of applications, but under fair housing laws, applicants cannot be rejected on the basis

of race, familial status, national origin, religion, disability, or sex.

In addition, co-ops will now be required to inform prospective buyers of the minimum financial requirements or financial preferences before home seekers file an application, and to provide fair housing training for co-op board members. ■

## ADDRESSING OUR HOUSING NEEDS

Westchester's vitality and economic sustainability depend on people with a wide range of incomes being able to live and work here; and, of course, we must always ensure that housing access is fair.

Westchester County reached a major milestone this August when a U.S. District Court Judge found the County in compliance with a 2009 federal consent decree over fair and affordable housing and that a federal housing monitor was no longer needed.

Thanks to the work of the Board,

the leadership of County Executive George Latimer, the work of the County Planning Department, the leadership of so many elected officials in our cities, towns and villages, and the co-operation of developers, the County satisfied the requirements of the settlement with the required target of 750 new units of housing reached this June.

While the federal court case may be satisfied, our work continues.

According to an assessment prepared for the County in November 2019 by

Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, Westchester needs more than 11,000 new units of housing that are accessible to our local workforce, that can keep seniors at home in their communities, and that can provide for our less economically advantaged residents.

This year we have approved more than 300 new units of rental housing across Greenburgh and Yonkers, in three separate developments. These include 44 units specifically for people 55 and older. ■

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

We continue our work to make Westchester a cleaner, greener and more sustainable place.

**PARKWAY NOISE MONITORING:** To combat noise pollution for residents living near our County parkways, this year we approved a study of an innovative technology solution to use automatic noise detectors to help the County identify—and ultimately ticket—drivers who violate legal noise limits. Under the program, the County will explore how to use noise detectors, along with pre-existing technology like traffic cameras and license plate readers, to automatically identify violators of current noise limits.

Reducing noise is both a quality of life issue as well as a public safety one, as it is often associated with dangerous behavior like drag racing. I hope that with this study we'll be able to arrive at a forward-looking, technology solution that we can deploy around the County.

**REPLACING DIESEL BUSES WITH HYBRID AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES:** To make our County transportation fleet more ecologically sound, this year we approved an acceleration of the program to replace the County's fleet of 17 30-foot diesel buses with hybrid-electric or all electric vehicles. The fleet is 16 years old

and a combination of State and County funding will allow us to replace more buses sooner—seven hybrid replacement buses this year.

At this point, 54% of the County's bus fleet is hybrid-electric or all electric, and the plan is to have the entire fleet fully hybrid or all electric by the end of 2023. ■



## VETERANS' TAX RELIEF

There are few things more important than supporting those who have served to protect us. That's why the Board voted unanimously to increase the property tax exemptions for veterans to the maximum level allowable under New York State law, raising the caps by nearly 39%.