



Westchester County Legislator
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Proudly Serving the 7th District



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Join Me in Taking the Great Healthy Yards Pledge

The Great Healthy Yards Project educates people about how the chemicals we put on our yards and gardens wash into our drinking water, explains how these chemicals are harmful, and how even at very small amounts they cause an increase in the population of several significant diseases. Most importantly, it provides us a way to move forward together and make a big change by educating a large number of people to change their behavior. Many people in our community have already found this project to be extremely valuable and I decided to take the pledge and I hope you'll join me.

THE PLEDGE

I, _____,
 pledge to help protect the quality of our local drinking water by managing my lawn and garden without synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers, except on rare occasions to improve habitat or resolve an infestation. I also promise to dispose of pharmaceuticals responsibly.

Address _____

Email _____ Acreage pledged _____

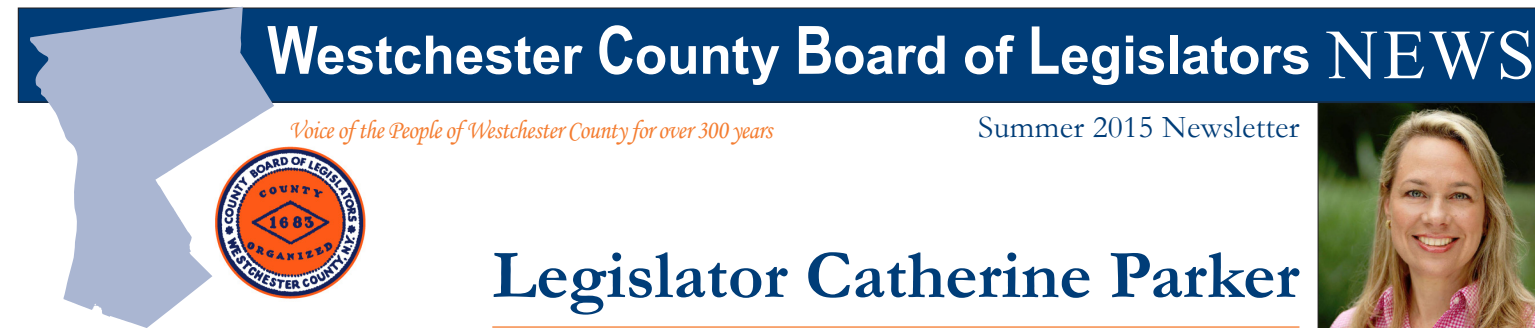
Include my name on your pledge list.

Pledge online at tghyp.com

Send Pledge Cards to Aviva Meyer at AvivaM@westchesterlegislators.com or Board of Legislators, 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor, White Plains, NY 10601

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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2015 Newsletter



Legislator Catherine Parker

District 7 ~ Mamaroneck, Rye, Larchmont,
 part of New Rochelle, part of Harrison

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

As your Legislator representing Westchester County's 7th Legislative District, I am taking this opportunity to update you on recent issues, activities and accomplishments regarding the Board of Legislators. We all know the importance of keeping a watchful eye on government activities, since they play such an important role in maintaining our quality of life.

I believe that we can do more to budget responsibly, examine more environmental efficiencies, and take a proactive approach to delivering services.

A good example of smart use of tax dollars is the recent creation of a County Energy Director that will help municipalities share services, harness greater purchasing power and examine places where the county as an entity can reduce its carbon footprint.

Protecting the environment has been a passion and concern of mine for many years, and as Chair of the Environment & Energy Committee, it has been exciting for this year to help the County set a direction of less dependence on fossil fuels, more resiliency in the face of climate change, and finding cost savings wherever possible through energy efficiency and reliance on renewable energy sources.

We have much more work to do. I ask for your continued support and cooperation. Working together, we can make a difference.

Please take time to contact me with any concerns or suggestions regarding budgeting or any other matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Catherine F. Parker

The 2015 "Borrow for Tomorrow" County Budget

The 2015 County budget is bad for the people of Westchester because it contains excessive borrowing for operating expenses that will yield big tax hikes, which will be paid with interest, for taxpayers in years to come.

Borrowing for operating expenses is like using your credit cards to pay your rent. It should only be done in the direst of circumstances. Holiday spending is the perfect metaphor for this type of budget: it feels good now but will cost dearly in the near future.

Independent watchdogs like the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee noted the structural imbalance in this "borrow for tomorrow" budget when it was first submitted last November by the County Executive. Their report cautioned that an unprecedented reliance on borrowing and "one shot" revenue sources to fund current year operating expenses was leading Westchester county to a dangerous, fiscally irresponsible future.

Democratic Legislators offered \$10 million in spending cuts to offset this massive borrowing and begin to make a down payment on a structurally balanced budget.

Due to the structurally imbalanced nature of the 2015 County Budget, with its unsustainable "borrow for tomorrow" strategy, I could not in good conscience vote for it.

After seeing the County's first quarter fiscal performance, I am confident that my vote was the correct vote. The county was once again well short of its unrealistic revenue projections and is now anticipating a \$56 million budget deficit heading into the next fiscal year. ■



Want E-News?

I regularly send out e-news letters, which include important information about different issues affecting residents, as well as notices about events that you may want to attend. To receive my e-news, please e-mail me your full name, e-mail address and mailing address and I will add you to my distribution list. My e-mail address is Parker@westchesterlegislators.com.

BOL Takes Action to Prevent Sale of Toxic Toys to Children



The “Children’s Product Safety Act”, which unanimously passed the Board of Legislators on May 11, will prevent the sale of infant and children’s products that include harmful toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde, benzene, lead, mercury, antimony, arsenic, cadmium and cobalt within the County of Westchester.

The toxic chemicals in children’s products have been linked to a host of serious medical problems including learning and developmental disabilities, asthma, pediatric and other cancer, infertility, obesity and more.

The Children’s Product Safety Act will be enforced by the County Department of Consumer Protection. The department would undertake a 12 month public education campaign to alert retailers of which chemicals are harmful and then with random spot checks of products already on shelves.

Similar pieces of legislation have already passed the Albany County Legislature and are being considered in Suffolk, Dutchess and Onondaga counties. The State Assembly has passed similar legislation in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion while the State Senate is still yet to take action despite having bipartisan support in that chamber as well.

Some of our first responders have indicated support for this concept as a result of how these chemicals can act as an accelerant in a fire that could be easily avoided.

This new law is a major help for parents and first responders alike. ■

Playland Set to Receive the Largest Capital Infusion Since it Was Built



Living in the immediate area around Playland has given me a unique perspective on how to approach the revitalization of Playland Park. It truly is the crown jewel of the county park system and is deserving of a better treatment than it has received in the last several decades.

This conclusion is a no-brainer as both a resident of the Playland neighborhood and a Westchester County taxpayer. Understanding the impact Playland has in our neighborhood and the value that significant improvements would bring, I fought to make sure that the park got much of what it has deserved while it has decayed over the years.

The result is the largest investment in Playland since it was built.

I am proud that we were able to accomplish our goals to improve such a valuable asset right in our neighborhood and do it in a way that makes this gem primed for success for generations to come. Here are some of the highlights of the new Playland Management agreement:

- Standard Amusements will pay the county \$2.25 million upfront, and then invest at least another \$22 million in the first five years of a 15-year agreement. It will also pay annual escalating payments starting at \$300,000 and cut the county in on 7.5 percent of the profits once it recoups its initial investment.
- Westchester County will commit to

the following capital improvements:

- North Boardwalk (currently in design)
- Colonnades
- Lights on Playland Parkway
- Playland Structural System
- Fire Suppression System
- Playland Pathway

The County Executive’s initial proposal raised significant concerns for local residents and ultimately did not hold up to scrutiny from the Board of Legislators. When the County Executive entered into the agreement with Standard Amusements, the Board of Legislators began their due diligence again and has significantly improved it from its original form by securing commitments about capital projects, size and scope of the park and employee protections.

It was also important that the neighbors of Playland have a seat at the table to advise Standard Amusements and the County about what the community priorities are as Playland changes begin to take place. Thanks to the collaboration with Friends of Edith Read Sanctuary, Westchester Children Museum, Save the Sound and the Westchester Historical Society, this advisory board will be able to protect the cultural and historic value of Playland.

This was not a perfect process by any stretch but I believe that the taxpayers will benefit from the increased value of Playland as a result of the capital infusion it will receive. ■

Raising the Age for Tobacco Sales/ E-Cigarette Legislation

This year the Board of Legislators has carefully considered two bills aimed to protect the health of our communities by helping people break the strong grip of tobacco products. The first of these bills would raise the minimum age requirement for the purchase of cigarettes and tobacco products in Westchester County from 18 to 21.

New York City, Nassau and Suffolk Counties have recently raised the age requirement to purchase tobacco and tobacco products to 21. There is compelling research that shows that delaying the start of use of tobacco products greatly diminished the length and severity of lifetime use. As Counties continue to bear a significant portion of health care costs through Medicare and Medicaid, it becomes clear that reducing smoking-related health issues provides financial benefits to county taxpayers.

During an early June meeting, the second bill that addresses this topic passed the Board of Legislators unanimously and amends the Westchester County Law to include electronic or battery operated devices under the Westchester Smoke-Free Worksite Law.

For over ten years, Westchester County has provided safe work environments

through the Smoke-Free Worksite Law, re-inforcing what was done on a state level through the New York Indoor Clean Air Act. This proposal would eliminate the uncertain distinctions that have been created since the introduction of electronic cigarettes.

Electronic Cigarettes are battery operated devices which are used by heating nicotine “juice” inside the device, which turns into a vapor that is then inhaled and exhaled in a similar fashion to cigarettes. While many have used “e-cigarettes” as smoking cessation products, they are catching on among non-smokers and teens that are under the impression that they are a risk-free alternative to cigarettes.

It is very important to understand that this law does not ban e-cigarettes; it is simply asking users to be more considerate of those who are not smokers and step outside during usage.

Both of these ideas will go a long way to protecting all residents of Westchester County. Both raising the age and clarifying the guidelines of “e-cig” usage would potentially make a long term difference in our communities to help those looking to break the cycle of addiction to tobacco products. ■

Westchester Creates Office of Energy Director to Improve Energy Efficiency and Environment & Find Savings for Taxpayers



The new office of the Energy Director is charged with finding opportunities for grants and funding for energy efficient upgrades to infrastructure and net significant savings in energy costs to taxpayers as the county incorporates technologies that would reduce dependence on carbon and in turn reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This legislation followed similar models of Energy Director Positions that have been created by municipalities in the region, including Yonkers, New York City and Philadelphia. These individuals in other places have already saved taxpayers significant amounts of money by implementing cost-saving measures that are environmentally-focused.

Families all over the county have taken steps to become more energy efficient and realize real savings every month as a result. It is long overdue that this county takes steps in the same direction by creating a Westchester County Energy Director. ■



Legislator Parker is joined after the Legislative Breakfast for the Child Care Council of Westchester by other County Legislators and Westchester’s state legislative delegation including Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assemblyman Steve Otis