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# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

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

Fall 2021 Newsletter



## Terry Clements

District 11 ~ New Rochelle, Pelham, Pelham Manor  
Chair, Intergovernmental Services

### NEW FAMILY COURT OPENS IN NEW ROCHELLE



I am proud to report that June 9, 2021, was the day we cut the ribbon for the brand-new Family Court building in New Rochelle. Westchester officials celebrated the grand opening with the judicial officials, project developers, and local residents.

The new facility at 26 Garden Street replaces a leased location on North Avenue with a new state-of-the-art facility that is centrally located, with great access to mass transit.

The 35,000-square-foot space has two courtrooms, three hearing rooms, judge's chambers, and offices for non-judicial

staff as well as for staff from the Office for Women, Department of Probation and other County agencies.

I was proud to play a role in finding this perfect location. The search was a collaborative effort between the County and local government, the Office of Court Administration, and the entire community. And getting the facility built was an exemplary public-private partnership between government and developers. The Board of Legislators conducted an extensive vetting of the County's 30-year lease at the new site before approving it in 2019, allowing construction to begin.

When we were faced with the expiring lease on the old Family Court branch in New Rochelle, it was important to keep a Family Court branch in the city, not only for New Rochelle residents but

residents of surrounding communities.

Family Court serves people with unexpected family circumstances, often at some of the most difficult times in their lives, hearing cases involving children and families, including child neglect, child custody, and support, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, adoption, and guardianship.

The new Family Court will be a bedrock for the New Rochelle community for years to come. ■



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It is an honor and privilege to represent District 11 on the Westchester County Board of Legislators. Right now, a year and a half after being at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, the people of New Rochelle, Pelham, and Pelham Manor are bouncing back.

Our continued recovery will require our ongoing commitment to one another. We must work diligently to increase our vaccination rates and take the necessary steps to minimize the risks of breakthrough infections caused by COVID variants. We must support our small businesses as they rebuild, and assist our neighbors struggling with lingering economic, health and housing impacts, resulting from the pandemic.

In County government, we continue to work on your behalf to provide help to restore our communities. The heroic work of the Westchester County's Health Department allowed us to respond when things were at their worst. The dedicated work of our Parks Department continues

to give the people of Westchester the safe, open space desperately needed during this time when so many other activities have been closed. Also, the Board of Legislators remains committed to investing in our infrastructure, improving government ethics and transparency, reforming our institutions, and protecting our environment to improve our quality of life here in Westchester.

I'm proud of the ongoing role as your representative on the County's Police Reform and Reinvention Task Force. As the Chair of the Board's Intergovernmental Services Committee, my committee is looking at ways to bridge the digital divide. I work with local organizations like HOPE Community Services to address food insecurity and the New Rochelle YMCA. The collaboration between the County Government and the City of New Rochelle led to the completion of the new state-of-the-art Family Court facility that opened in downtown New Rochelle.

The work continues in the months

ahead. We will negotiate new capital and operating budgets for 2022. We will decide how to use funds from the American Rescue Plan to strengthen our economy, modernize our infrastructure, invest in health care, and narrow the digital divide. These decisions will shape Westchester not just tomorrow but for years to come. It's important that we allow our shared values of fairness, equity, sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and openness and transparency to lead us in every decision we make.

As always, I would love to hear from you. I invite you to please reach out to me with your concerns, issues and your ideas for how we can continue to make Westchester County one of the best communities to reside.

Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,

### WESTCHESTER TOPS 1M RESIDENTS

Westchester is a great place to live and it seems like everyone is learning that these days. The 2020 Census data released in August shows Westchester topping 1 million in population for the first time in our history, growing nearly 6 percent over the prior 10 years. The final count is well above estimates and ensures our eligibility for billions of dollars in State and Federal funding allocated by population. That's good for our schools, our roads, our hospitals, our fire departments, our youth programs and more. I was proud to serve on the County's Complete Count Committee, and I want to thank everyone who worked so hard to ensure the fullest counting possible of Westchester residents, especially during the COVID pandemic.



## POLICE REFORM

In March, the Board of Legislators voted unanimously to adopt the report from Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force, establishing a road map for police reform in Westchester County.

I was honored to serve as a member of this historic Task Force, which included public safety personnel, community leaders, members of the County Executive's staff and two other legislators. Our outstanding work was a model for how government officials, and community members can work together to address complex issues.

The Board's review of our 177-page report took place over nearly a dozen meetings with Task Force members, public safety officials, community leaders and the public. We thoroughly examined the report's 50+ recommendations for the County police, correction and other public safety operations.

Those recommendations included:

- A formal review of the County Department of Public Safety, use

of social media for branding and community outreach

- Establishment of community liaisons
- Increased multi-lingual communications
- Increased Police Academy training in procedural justice, cultural diversity, implicit bias, cultural competency, and restorative justice
- Provide updated training in the previously mentioned areas for law enforcement personnel, including School Resource Officers
- Joint de-escalation training with the Department of Correction
- Creation and implementation of a County-wide electronic database for mental health behavioral cases and special needs populations

I'm pleased to say that many 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 State government, to agree on details, explore legal requirements, and establish policies and processes.

I'm proud to serve as part of a small, ongoing extension of the Task Force which will continue to examine how best to implement the full Task Force's recommendations.

This is just the beginning of a generational process and reflects our continuing commitment to protecting the public, improving transparency, ensuring fairness and modernizing policing in Westchester. ■

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

To make the County's transportation fleet more ecologically sound, this year we approved an acceleration of the program to replace the 30-foot diesel buses with hybrid-electric or all-electric vehicles.

The replacement program includes \$4.75 million of county funding and \$7.5 million in New York State Public Transportation Modernization and Enhancement Program funds. The County's 17

30-foot diesel buses are 16 years old. The state funding will allow us to replace more buses sooner -- seven hybrid replacement buses this year.

The County already has six all-electric 30-foot buses on order and is studying how many all-electric 30-foot buses we can accommodate. We hope to be able to order even more all-electric vehicles with this money as we continue to replace our

aging fleet.

The County is also replacing 104 40-foot diesel buses with hybrid-electrics. We expect delivery of these vehicles late this year.

Thanks to this program, 54 percent of the County's bus fleet already 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. ■

## COMBATING NOISE ON OUR PARKWAYS

If you live near the Hutchinson River Parkway, or any of our County parkways, you may know that vehicles violating legal noise limits is a major problem.

That's why I was excited to join all my colleagues on the Board in approving 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 identify violators of current noise limits of 75 decibels automatically. Reducing noise is more than a quality of life issue. This kind of noise is often associated with dangerous behavior like drag racing. Drivers cannot be allowed to zoom through our communities without regard to basic safety and noise concerns. I hope that with this study, we will be able to arrive at a technology solution that we can deploy around the County. ■

## VETERANS' TAX RELIEF

There are few things more important than supporting those who have served to protect us. For that reason, 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%.

## BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we relied on internet technology to work from home and educate our children.

But the pandemic revealed gaps in access to technology, and especially broadband access relating to income inequalities, that persist more than a quarter of a century into the internet age.

I saw this starkly in my work as a teacher. Children with insufficient broadband access at home faced daunting struggles to keep up with their schoolwork and participate fully in the remote education process.

Even as vaccination rates grow, society will continue to rely on broadband access. We cannot allow a generation of children to fall behind because their

families do not have full access to essential technology. It is our responsibility to provide them with an education, which is crucial to their development as productive members of society, with a full range of opportunities before them.

Importantly, we cannot leave a generation of workers to face shrinking opportunities because broadband access is limited. For this reason, as Chair of the Board's Intergovernmental Services Committee, I have begun exploring ways the County can, and must, address this digital divide.

With Federal money from the American Rescue Plan, we have an opportunity to invest in the infrastructure

to increase broadband access. Our committee will be working with the County Executive, State and Federal officials to develop plans for investing in this vital infrastructure upgrade.

But infrastructure investment alone won't bridge the digital divide. To close the gap in a sustainable way, we must work with internet service providers to make affordable lifeline internet services available to those facing economic challenges. The Intergovernmental Services Committee has already begun discussions with the ISPs serving Westchester to understand their plans. As a team, we will explore ways the County can work with them to make sure our efforts close the digital divide successfully. ■



Opening Rye Playland for the 2021 Season



Juneteenth Passion & Perseverance presented by Lincoln Park Conservancy Inc. & Westchester County



Juneteenth in Pelham



City Officials joined LGBTQ Advisory Committee & New Rochelle Pride for Annual New Rochelle Pride Day



Space Week at the New Rochelle YMCA



Pelham American Legion Post 50



Boys and Girls Club of New Rochelle Olympics day



LT. Robinson Drive-Thru book giveaway New Rochelle



LT. Robinson, Detective Fudge, Police Officer Johnson, Author Annie Turnquest and Mt. Vernon Detective Clarke