



2018-2019 End of Term Report from Chairman Benjamin Boykin II

December 2019

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN



The end of 2019 marks the close of an historic two-year term for the Westchester County Board of Legislators, which began in January 2018.

The residents of Westchester elected the most diverse Board in County history and asked us to confront many challenges.

Foremost was the need to stabilize the County's finances, after years of structural budget deficits and dwindling reserve funds. We faced a backlog of hundreds of millions of dollars of essential improvements to roads, bridges, parks and treatment facilities which had gone unaddressed for too long. And we had a solemn duty to provide essential services to our residents, and to make sure that our laws and regulations reflect our values of making Westchester more safe, fair, inclusive and sustainable than we found it.

While there is always more work to be done, I'm proud that with diligent effort, bipartisan cooperation and a steadfast focus on our values, the Board has been able to achieve these goals.

STABILIZING THE COUNTY'S FINANCES

This month, the Board of Legislators approved County budgets for 2020 that dramatically improve the County's financial well-being.

The 2020 operating budget reduces the County's property tax levy by \$1 million.

We are putting \$10 million into the County's fund balance. 2020 will be the second year in a row that we have been able to increase the County's rainy day funds, after years of declines under the prior administration that had cut our savings in half.

We have also ended the practice of balancing our budget by relying on one-shot revenues and borrowing to fund operating expenses.

By equalizing the sales tax rate in all areas except the "big four" cities – Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, White Plains and Yonkers -- we have been able to increase the revenue we share with local municipalities and school districts. That's tens of millions of dollars for our towns, villages and school districts that don't come from local property tax increases.

We also approved contracts with all of the County's civilian and public safety unions for the first time in seven years, giving the County much needed predictability in budgeting.

We're already seeing results of our work, as Standard & Poor's recently upgraded its credit outlook for Westchester from negative to stable.

RESTORING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

When the term began, the County faced an enormous capital projects backlog. Deferred work left our roadways pitted and our bridges crumbling, and putting off work makes completing it more expensive in the long run -- so we set out to rectify the situation.

Since the start of 2018, the Board has approved dozens of projects that will bring our infrastructure up to date.

These include repaving a large stretch of the Bronx River Parkway, rehabilitating ramps on the Bronx River and Cross County Parkways, replacing bridges, repairing County roads, aiding municipalities with flood mitigation, rehabilitating the runway and updating the de-icing equipment at the Westchester County Airport, renovating our Household Material Recovery Facility and wastewater treatment plants, and more.

IMPROVING OUR PARKS

Over the past two years we've taken significant steps to improve our award-winning parks system.

The Miller House -- a 300-year-old building on the National Register of Historic Places that was a command center for George Washington during the Battle of White Plains -- has been restored and re-opened.

We have authorized the acquisition of the North County Trailway for \$1 from NYS; approved work to repave the North County Trailway and to design repairs for the South County Trailway.

At Playland, we've approved work to repair the bathhouse and rehabilitate the shoreline, as well as to restore historic rides and to install the first new ride in more than 11 years.

We've approved the repair of ballfields at Saxon Woods Park in White Plains and Tibbetts Brooks Park in Yonkers, the Glen Island Sea Wall in New Rochelle and the dams at Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill and Cortlandt. Also approved are renovations to Willson's Woods Park in Mount Vernon, to the historic Merestead

park in Bedford and the Wightman Mansion at the Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers.

SAFEGUARDING OUR ENVIRONMENT

The protection of our environment is of paramount importance in every decision we make at the Board of Legislators.

During this term we passed a law prohibiting the use of expanded polystyrene (EPS) takeout food packaging to keep this material from littering our streets, landfills and waterways. We authorized legal action against those who left behind noxious chemicals at the County airport to pay for the cost of cleanup. We voted to establish energy benchmarking procedures so we can track energy use and efficiency in County buildings. We authorized the replacement of much of our bus and ParaTransit fleet with energy efficient, hybrid vehicles to reduce the carbon footprint of our transportation services. And we continually review every County project to ensure that they are designed with conservation, energy efficiency and the best environmental practices in mind.

INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The necessity for more affordable housing in Westchester – starkly detailed in the County’s recently released Affordable Housing Needs Assessment – has been a top concern for the Board.

Over the past two years, we have approved developments that will add more than 800 new units of affordable housing throughout Westchester -- in Greenburgh, Harrison, New Rochelle, Peekskill, Port Chester, Somers, White Plains and Yonkers – for seniors and others.

But more work needs to be done, which is why in the 2020 capital budget we voted to add an additional \$20 million next year to County programs that support the development of affordable housing.

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

The County has a crucial role to play in protecting the health and well-being of Westchester residents.

That's why we passed a law raising the age for the purchase of tobacco and vaping products in Westchester from 18 to 21, and the Board has begun consideration of further legislation to protect against the possible health dangers of vaping. In addition, in the face of measles and other infectious disease outbreaks, we strengthened the ability of our Health Commissioner and Board of Health

to respond to unexpected outbreaks.

SUPPORTING WORKING FAMILIES

Working families are the backbone of Westchester County, and this term the Board has taken historic steps to support them.

Thanks to the Earned Sick Leave Law we passed, thousands of Westchester workers are now able to earn sick time without fear of losing their jobs.

We passed a law combating the wage gap that women and minorities face by eliminating questions about prior salaries in hiring. We also passed a law which moves questions about a job applicant's criminal background to a point after the initial job application, so that qualified applicants trying to rebuild their lives are no longer disqualified from the opportunity by a checkbox.

We ensured that domestic violence survivors are able to take time off from work for court or other legal proceedings, or to move from an abuser’s residence.

We passed a measure protecting workers from wage theft by unscrupulous employers and strengthened laws protecting building service workers who are displaced when buildings or building service contracts change hands.

ENHANCING THE SAFETY NET

We've worked to increase support for our nonprofit partners who help us provide necessary services to people in need across Westchester.

We've increased support for child care, to make high quality daycare more available to working parents. We've expanded the availability of legal help for domestic violence survivors. We've provided added support to community health care centers. We are working to focus particular attention on mental health programs. And we've increased support for eviction prevention services, which keep people in their homes and save the County money by keeping families out of the shelter system.

MAKING WESTCHESTER MORE FAIR AND INCLUSIVE

This term we have worked with the administration to revitalize the County's Human Rights Commission (“HRC”). And the Board established the County's first-ever Advisory Board on People with Disabilities.

We passed legislation so that the HRC can track co-op sales and rejections to ensure that no co-ops in Westchester are engaging in discrimination.

We passed a ban on so-called "conversion therapy" for minors.

We opposed the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 census. We approved appointments to the County's Complete Count Committee to ensure that all residents of Westchester are included in the upcoming census. We also passed, with bi-partisan support, the Immigration Protection Act. This is not a sanctuary law, but increases trust and cooperation between County employees, law enforcement and all residents.

We established a Voting Reform Working Group to address new state voting laws, including early voting implementation. We are proud that Westchester had one of the highest early voting turnouts in the state.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SAFETY

We remain committed to the safety of the residents of Westchester County and to providing funds to the Departments of Public Safety, Corrections and Probation as well as to our Emergency Medical Services and the District Attorney's office.

We updated reporting requirements for second-hand dealers, to help law enforcement recover stolen items like jewelry, coins and silver, and to discourage dealers from accepting property that may be stolen.

We passed funding to upgrade the radio communications system used by our emergency first responders.

We took action to support a state "red flag" law, allowing authorities to go to court to keep guns out of the hands of people who pose a threat to themselves or others.

We also worked with our state partners on criminal justice reforms -- to speed up trials, to give the accused full access to information about the cases against them at the start of the case, and to end cash bail in many cases -- because people should not be treated differently by the criminal justice system based on whether or not they can afford bail.

And we began this term by banning gun shows on County-owned property.

TECHNOLOGY AT THE BOL

Finally, we have begun modernizing the Board's online

outreach. After more than a decade, the Board now has a new, easier-to-navigate, mobile-friendly website. We've also upgraded our online video streaming, so that all of our meetings are available in high definition. In 2020 we will be moving to a new agenda management system that will make the Board's documents more accessible and searchable online.

I would like to thank my fellow legislators for the hard work, dedication and collaboration they displayed throughout the term. Working together we have accomplished an enormous amount.

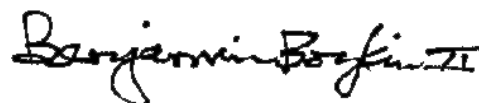
I would also like to extend my thanks to County Executive George Latimer for the cooperative, transparent relationship he and his administration have maintained as we work together for the benefit of the people of Westchester.

In addition, I want to thank the Board's lean, smart, dedicated, capable and tireless staff. The achievements of this term and this legislature would be impossible without their excellence and devotion to their jobs and to the residents of this County.

The end of this term means we will be saying goodbye to four legislators – Minority Leader John Testa in District 1, Minority Whip Gordon Burrows in District 15, Legislator Virginia Perez in District 17, and former Board Chair Michael Kaplowitz in District 4, who has joined County Executive George Latimer's administration as a Deputy Commissioner in the Department of Environmental Facilities after 22 years on the Board of Legislators.

I'd also like to extend my personal welcome and best wishes to next term's new legislators – Colin Smith in District 1, Vedat Gashi in District 4, Ruth Walter in District 15, and, returning to service in District 17, Jose Alvarado.

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as the Board Chair and District 5 Legislator during this term. I'm proud that we've seized this moment to make an historic difference for the residents of Westchester County.



Benjamin Boykin II
Chairman of the Board

STABILIZING COUNTY FINANCES

- \$1M reduction in County property tax levy in 2020 budget
- Added \$5M to the County's general rainy day funds in 2019, and another \$10M in 2020 budget; credit outlook upgraded
- \$65M in new revenue shared with local municipalities and school districts in 2019 and 2020 budgets by equalizing sales tax rate outside of the “big four” cities
- Ended the use of one-shot revenues to balance budgets
- Ended the use of borrowing to pay for operating expenses

RESTORING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Approved projects include:

- Repaving county roads including Bronx River Parkway
- Rehabilitation of Bronx River Parkway/Cross County Parkway ramps and overpasses
- Repaving and replacement of signage on major roadways throughout the County
- Rehabilitation of County Airport runway
- Rehabilitation of Material Recovery Facility & Transfer Station
- Equipment upgrades at Yonkers and Mamaroneck wastewater treatment facilities
- Flood mitigation projects in New Rochelle, Port Chester, Rye Brook and Mamaroneck



IMPROVING OUR PARKS

Approved projects include:

- Restoration of Miller House
- Reconstruction & repair of North County Trailway & study to repair South County Trailway
- Renovations to Playland Bathhouse, Grand Carousel and Derby Racer, shoreline rehabilitation and installation of the first new ride in more than 11 years
- Renovation of playgrounds at Willson's Woods Park in Mount Vernon
- Repair of former Wightman mansion at Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers
- Rehabilitation of ballfields at Saxon Woods and Tibbetts Brook Park
- Development and repair of Merestead park in Mount Kisco and Bedford
- Repair of dams at Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill and Cortlandt



SAFEGUARDING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Highlights include:

- Prohibition on expanded polystyrene (EPS) takeout food containers
- Authorized lawsuit to clean up chemicals at Westchester County Airport
- New energy efficient, hybrid vehicles purchased for Bee-Line buses and ParaTransit
- Energy benchmarking established for County buildings



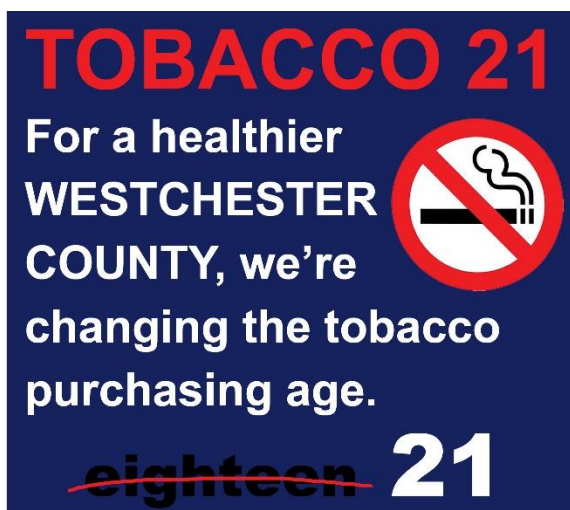
INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Over 800 units of new affordable housing approved throughout the County
- Supported state laws to strengthen protections for renters
- Approved capital budget for 2020 with \$20M in new funding for affordable housing



PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

- Raised the age for the purchase of tobacco products to 21
- Strengthened ability of County Department of Health to respond to unexpected infectious disease outbreaks
- Began consideration of ban on flavored e-cigarettes and vaping liquids



SUPPORTING WORKING FAMILIES

- Earned Sick Leave Law passed
- Safe Leave Law for domestic violence survivors passed
- Protections against wage theft passed
- Protections for displaced building service workers strengthened
- Salary history prohibition passed to protect against gender/race wage gap
- Fair Chance to Work Law passed



ENHANCING THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Initiatives include:

- Increased support for nonprofit child care providers and County child service programs
- Additional funding for eviction prevention
- Additional backing for legal help for domestic violence survivors
- Added support for community health centers
- Increased focus on mental health services

MAKING WESTCHESTER MORE FAIR & INCLUSIVE

- Approved more than 300 appointments to departments, advisory boards and commissions, including:
 - New appointees to renewed Human Rights Commission
 - Created first-ever Advisory Council on People with Disabilities
 - Complete Count Committee to ensure accurate census count
- Co-op disclosure law passed to protect against housing discrimination
- “Conversion therapy” for minors banned
- Immigration Protection Law passed
- Worked with State and County officials to implement voting reform



STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SAFETY

- Supported New York State criminal justice reforms
- Supported New York State "red flag" law
- New reporting requirements passed for second hand gem dealers to help law enforcement track and recover stolen goods
- Funding approved for new radio system for emergency responders
- Ban on gun shows on County-owned property

2018-2019 KEY LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Banning Gun Shows on County-Owned Property (Feb. 5, 2018)
- Immigration Protection Act (March 12, 2018)
- Probe of Poor Storm Preparation and Response by Con Ed, NYSEG (public meetings with utilities on March 19, June 4, & Oct. 2, 2018)
- Resolution Supporting State Bill to Create Extreme Risk Protection Orders (March 26, 2018)
- Combating Gender/Race-Based Wage Gaps by Banning Salary History Questions in Hiring (April 9, 2018)
- Law to Encourage Hiring of Disabled-Veteran-Owned Businesses in County Contracting (April 23, 2018)
- Resolution Opposing Citizenship Question on 2020 Census Short Form (May 7, 2018)
- Raising Age for Sale of Tobacco and Vaping Products to 21 (June 4, 2018)
- Banning the Use of County Executive's Name or Likeness on County Property & Promotional Signs (June 18, 2018)
- Ensuring Public Safety Chaplin Accountability and Transparency (June 18, 2018)
- Funding Memorial for Slain Mount Vernon Police Officer (July 16, 2018)
- Ensuring Earned Sick Leave for Workers (Oct. 1, 2018)
- Banning Conversion Therapy for Minors (Oct. 1, 2018)
- Pyrotechnic Children's Safety Act (Oct. 1, 2018)
- Approved New CSEA Contract Ensuring Contracts for All Unions for First Time in Seven Years (Oct. 15, 2018)
- Ongoing Program to Honor Military Veterans Now Serving as Firefighters, Police Officers, EMS Workers (Oct. 29, 2018)
- Home Improvement Licensing Law Changed to Protect Workers from "Wage Theft" (Nov. 19, 2018)
- Co-op Disclosure Law Passed (Nov. 19, 2018)
- Taking Control of Memorial Field Restoration (Dec. 3, 2018)
- Fair Chance to Work Act Passed (Dec. 3, 2018)
- Voting Reform Working Group Formed to Help Implement Early Voting and Other NYS Voting Changes (Jan. 2019)
- Resolution in Support of NYS Criminal Justice Reforms (March 25, 2019)
- Safe Leave Law Passed (April 23, 2019)
- Restricting Outdoor Tethering for Dogs (May 20, 2019)
- Ban on Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Takeout Food Containers (May 20, 2019)
- Resolution to Support Emergency Tenant's Protection Act (June 3, 2019)
- Approval of New Lease for New Rochelle Family Court (July 15, 2019)
- Displaced Service Employees Protection Law (Sept. 16, 2019)
- Law Requiring Stricter Reporting from Second Hand Gem Dealers to Help Law Enforcement Track and Recover Stolen Property (Sept. 16, 2019)
- Strengthening Communicable Disease Protections (Sept. 25, 2019)
- Formation of Advisory Council on People with Disabilities (Oct. 7, 2019)
- More than 800 New Units of Affordable Housing Approved
 - In Greenburgh – 74 units of senior housing

- In Harrison – 14 units affordable housing
- In New Rochelle – 314 units of affordable housing
- In Peekskill – 85 units of affordable housing
- In Port Chester – 34 units of senior housing
- In Somers – 16 units affordable housing
- In White Plains – 56 units of senior housing, 129 additional units of affordable housing
- In Yonkers – 42 units for formerly homeless and special needs populations, 63 additional units of affordable housing
- Major Public Works & Transportation Projects Approved
 - Rehabilitation of Bronx River Parkway/Cross County Parkway ramps
 - Replacing and repairing equipment at wastewater treatment facilities in Yonkers and Mamaroneck
 - Purchase of nearly 80 new Bee-Line buses which will have almost double the fuel efficiency of previous fleet, and new energy efficient hybrid ParaTransit vehicles
 - Retrofitting of cameras on existing ParaTransit mini-buses for high definition and improved mobile data equipment
 - Completion of the design and construction of pathway from Rye Metro North Station to Playland
 - Updating technology infrastructure and physical plant repairs at Westchester Community College
 - Replacement of Mamaroneck Avenue Bridge over Mamaroneck River
 - Expand Saw Mill Sewer District to 800 parcels in New Castle
 - Flood mitigation around Avon Circle in Rye Brook and the athletic fields at the Port Chester Middle School
 - Flood mitigation near Pinebrook Boulevard in New Rochelle
 - Rehabilitation of runway at Westchester County Airport
 - Replacement and repair of more than 30 signs and sign structures on County roadways
 - Rehabilitation of Material Recovery Facility & Transfer Station
 - Final phase of rehabilitation of Department of Environmental Services main facility
 - Rehabilitation of Glen Island Bridge in New Rochelle
 - Road repairs as follows:
 - Highland Road and Union Avenue in Harrison
 - Theodore Fremd Avenue and Midland Avenue in Rye
 - Pelham Parkway in Pelham Manor
 - Orchard Street, Main Street, Grand Avenue, Westchester Avenue, and the intersection of South Broadway & Post Road in White Plains
 - Main Street in Eastchester
 - Mamaroneck Avenue in Mamaroneck, Harrison and White Plains
 - Farragut Avenue in Hastings-on-Hudson
 - Bronx River Parkway in Greenburgh, Scarsdale and Eastchester
 - Greenwich Road in Bedford
 - Sherwood Avenue and Oak Street in Yonkers
 - Old Saw Mill River Road and Columbus Avenue in Mt. Pleasant
 - Main Street and Washington Street in Peekskill
 - Bedford Road in Pleasantville
 - Seven Bridges Road in New Castle

- Long Ridge Road in Pound Ridge
- Parks Improvements Approved
 - Repair of Glen Island Sea Wall in New Rochelle
 - Renovation of Maple Moor Golf Course
 - Restoration of Miller House
 - Authorized the acquisition of the North County Trailway for \$1 from NYS; approved reconstruction and repair
 - Study and design of reconstruction and repair of South County Trailway
 - Renovation of playgrounds at Willson's Woods Park in Mount Vernon
 - Repair of former Wightman mansion at Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers
 - Rehabilitation of ballfields at Saxon Woods in White Plains and Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers
 - Development and repair of Merestead park in Mount Kisco and Bedford
 - Repair of 3 dams at Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill and Cortlandt
 - Replacement of Playland Bathhouse canopy, renovations to the Grand Carousel and Derby Racer, shoreline rehabilitation and first new ride in over 11 years
 - Repair and renovation of the Sprain Ridge Pool in Yonkers
- Vetted and Approved More than 300 Key Appointees to Departments, Advisory Boards and Commissions