



Mid-Year Report from Chairman Benjamin Boykin II

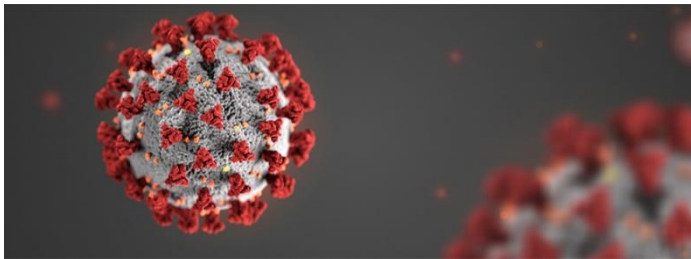
July 2020

The first half of 2020 has been a time of profound challenges for all of us in Westchester County...

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 has caused deep personal loss, economic instability and dislocation across the County. The lives of more than 1,400 Westchester residents have been claimed by this disease — our friends, neighbors and family members. So many more have lost jobs or have made huge personal sacrifices as essential workers. Students and teachers have had to quickly reimagine the learning process. And we've all had to forgo the traditional ceremonies marking the milestones in our lives that give us strength and unity. We mourn for those who we have lost, and will never forget them.

I am proud that the Board of Legislators has never stopped working for the people of Westchester during this time of crisis. Our office has remained open with limited staffing and best practices for health and safety. Investments at the Board in new internet and videoconferencing technology over the past two years kept us ahead of the curve and we were able to continue to conduct business under the State's Open Meetings Law and a range of changing Executive Orders from the Governor. Through our E-News, we have been able to provide information and resources to the public on a daily basis. This Board has not missed a single meeting, and has continued to take the necessary legislative actions to provide essential services for the people of Westchester at a time when those services are most important.



The entire County government has had to respond quickly, cooperatively and decisively to this emergency.

Working with Federal, State and local officials in partnership with the County Executive, Westchester was

able to rapidly institute coronavirus testing, expand hospital capacity, make changes to our mass transit, provide personal protective equipment to medical personnel, and enforce health and safety measures such as requiring masks and social distancing in order to mitigate the scope of this disaster. These measures could not have been implemented without the tireless efforts of our County Health Department, under the leadership of Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler, and with the help of her dedicated staff.



In addition, we were able to enact a range of property tax relief measures, extending the deadlines for taxpayers facing COVID-19 related hardship and slashing late payment penalties for every other property taxpayer during this crisis.

Because of foresight in constructing the 2020 operating budget, we were able to enact a series of measures as a rapid response to the dramatic loss of County revenue resulting from the pandemic. These measures included reallocating \$10 million that had been earmarked for the County's rainy day fund, and reducing spending by at least \$11 million by bonding for certiorari repayments and annual pension contribution costs. These actions were not taken lightly — we sought to avoid these practices, which caused structural imbalances in County budgets in the past. But because we had acted last year to stabilize the County's finances, we had leeway to do things this year, on an emergency basis, when the County is facing a pandemic-related revenue shortfall of tens of millions of dollars. Our legislative decisions to invest in mental health and social service programs such as eviction protection and safe leave for victims of domestic violence proved fortuitous for strengthening the safety net when it was most needed. In addition, the County has provided a Voluntary Separation Program available to most County and Board of Legislators employees. Employees have until July 24, 2020 to participate in the program, which is another cost savings opportunity for the County.

No one knows what the second half of 2020 will bring in terms of County revenue or the amount of Federal and State aid that may be provided to counties and local governments to bridge pandemic-related gaps. It may take several years, but together with the County Executive, we will continue to work responsibly to rebuild the County's finances. As part of this effort, we are working to help our businesses and non-profits return to health. Legislator Catherine Parker, a former small business owner, is co-chair of the recently created Westchester County Reopening Task Force, which will help guide us as we reopen our economy.

Work and vigilance must continue both to prevent future waves of transmission and to deal with the human and financial costs of the pandemic. As we forge a path to a new normal, rest assured that the Board of Legislators and its dedicated staff will honor their commitment to serving the people of Westchester County.

ELECTION IMPROVEMENTS



Our election system was stressed in unprecedented ways this year. The COVID-19 outbreak affected the Board of Elections' ability to recruit and train poll workers. Due to lack of availability, polling sites changed location and were reduced in number. A series of emergency Executive Orders from the Governor changed election dates and deadlines multiple times, and instituted entirely new and unplanned-for procedures for absentee balloting. As a result, during the June 23 primary elections, confusion about absentee voting was widespread, and in many locations election day lines were unacceptably long. We must do better this November.

Our elections are conducted by the Westchester County Board of Elections (BOE), which operates under New York State Election Law and is governed by

the New York State Board of Elections. The County Board of Legislators has no authority over how the BOE conducts elections or operates its communications. However, as the elected representatives of the people, we must do what we can to push for short- and long-term improvements.

After the June 23 primaries, I established an Election Information Gathering Task Force, co-chaired by Legislators Catherine Borgia and Vedat Gashi and including Board Vice Chair Alfreda Williams and Majority Leader MaryJane Shimsky, which convened a public input session on July 8. More than 70 members of the public registered to speak that night and we received nearly 100 written comments. Those who spoke shared extremely valuable insights from their experiences and offered many useful suggestions for improvements. These will be included as part of the Task Force's written report, to be completed August 7.

Our Budget and Appropriations Committee separately heard from outside experts from the League of Women Voters of Westchester, Common Cause New York, VoteEarlyNY and others, and their input also will be included in the report.

Finally, I have scheduled a Committee of the Whole meeting at which all Legislators will be able to hear from and ask questions of the County's Election Commissioners and BOE staff.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic will surely still present challenge for voting in November, the Board of Elections has time to prepare now, and we stand ready to help it act swiftly and decisively.

POLICE REFORM

The first half of 2020 saw us dealing with another crisis -- responding to the calls for police reform sparked by the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minnesota. Mr. Floyd's killing was just one incident among a long history of racial injustices, but this one seems to be the catalyst for change that is long overdue.



Although the Westchester Board of Legislators had no legal authority to act on behalf of justice for Mr. Floyd in Minnesota, we felt we had a moral imperative to raise our voices. In a letter signed by all members of the Board of Legislators to officials in Minneapolis, we urged justice for Mr. Floyd.

When our State Legislators began consideration of police reform bills in Albany, our Legislators sent a letter to them, urging changes to a law that shielded police disciplinary records from public scrutiny. The repeal of that law and other police reform measures were passed by our State Legislators and signed into law by Governor Cuomo in June. These historic reforms — which include a ban on chokeholds by law enforcement officers, a prohibition on false race-based 911 reports, and the designation of the Attorney General as an independent prosecutor for matters relating to the civilian deaths — are the first steps in a process to ensure that all the actions we take in policing and public safety are fair and equitable.

In addition to Legislator Kitley Covill serving on the County's Police Board, the County Executive has formed a Task Force on police reform which includes Legislators Lyndon Williams, Terry Clements and Colin Smith. In addition to revising police training procedures, the Task Force will develop a plan to reinvent and modernize police strategies and programs based on community input, in accordance with an Executive Order from Governor Cuomo.

The Task Force's draft plan will be delivered to the Board of Legislators by year's end.

We will hold a full slate of committee meetings, which are always open to the public, to vet the reinvention plan, and we will convene public hearings before we vote on its adoption.

PUBLIC WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout the enormous challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of improving the County's infrastructure has continued at the Board of Legislators, in order to make up for the neglect of our roads, bridges, wastewater facilities and parks by past administrations.

Although we are facing budget challenges presented by the loss of revenue from coronavirus-related declines in economic activity, we must be forward-thinking when it comes to infrastructure. Making capital improvements now, at a time when interest rates are historically low, is a smart investment in Westchester's future.



In the first half of 2020, we approved County road and bridge restoration projects for major thoroughfares across Westchester — from Louisa St., North Division St. and Charles Point Ave. in Peekskill; to Palmer and Tuckahoe Road in Yonkers; from the Boston Post Rd. Bridge in Rye to Westchester Avenue in White Plains; from Lincoln Avenue in Pelham to Willett Avenue in Port Chester to Hardscrabble Road in North Salem. This investment of over \$25 million will be enjoyed by residents as they travel from one end of the County to the other for years.

Our award-winning County Parks system, while always an integral part of recreation for residents, has been an essential resource and outlet for mental and physical health during the pandemic. Having places of respite and relaxation for the people of Westchester has never been more important, and we are committed to improving and maintaining these places.

So far this year, the Board has approved plans to finally finish the restoration of Memorial Field in Mount Vernon. Completion of this long-lingering project

will create a great countywide resource for track and field and other events, and will return to the residents of our most densely populated city the open space for recreation that they need and deserve.

We have allocated \$5 million for major improvements to our well-traveled North and South County Trailways; approved the rehabilitation of dilapidated buildings at Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers and Lasdon Park in Katonah; approved renovation of Pat Henry Field in Mount Pleasant; approved infrastructure repairs to Hilltop Hanover Farm & Environmental Center in Yorktown; and approved projects for the Kensico Dam Plaza in Valhalla and the Mountain Lakes Park Dam in North Salem.

While it may not be the most glamorous job of County government, waste management is one of the most important. Some of our wastewater recovery facilities are more than 50 years old. That's why we acted this year to rebuild, replace and repair treatment plants, sluice gates, pumping stations and sewer and septic systems in Yonkers, Peekskill, New Rochelle, Ossining, Mamaroneck, Port Chester, Blind Brook, Harrison and Bedford.

We also approved projects to improve our ability to handle household waste by rehabilitating maintenance facilities in Yonkers and Yorktown.

Great infrastructure is the foundation on which Westchester's future will be built, and we will continue to invest in it.

ENVIRONMENT



The Board's commitment to a greener environment includes improving and modernizing our transportation system to make it cleaner and more energy efficient.

In the first half of the year, we've approved a plan to replace more than 100 Bee-Line diesel buses with new, hybrid electric ones. We also approved the installation of a new charging station and two all-electric buses as we prepare for a move to even cleaner, all electric vehicles in our bus fleet. In addition, we approved the installation of public-use electric vehicle charging stations in County parking facilities to make cleaner cars more accessible and help reduce carbon emissions throughout the County.

We've approved funding for the design and construction of a food scrap composting and education facility at the County's Household Material Recovery Facility in Valhalla. The new facility will allow us to divert food scraps from the County's waste stream to produce energy and/or compost, allowing us to reduce the volume of waste disposed of by the County's residents and business.

We also adopted an important resolution seeking the creation of a formal plan to reduce the County's greenhouse gas emissions and reduce our carbon footprint, including:

- augmentation of existing greenhouse gas emission reduction programs across municipalities and educational facilities
- continuing electrification of the County's municipal vehicle fleet
- continuing conversion of lightbulbs to LED lights
- continuing the transition to green buildings
- encouraging food scrap recycling and green procurement
- increasing the number of electric vehicle charging stations

CENSUS 2020

I'd like to share an important reminder — it's not too late to participate in the 2020 Census. The deadline has been extended to October 31 so there is still time. You should have received an invitation in the mail to complete it either online, by phone, or by mail. Census takers also go door-to-door, and will resume this once it has been deemed safe. When you respond to the census, your answers are kept anonymous.

The Census counts every person living in the United States, regardless of age or citizenship status, every 10 years. It is crucial because our count will determine how millions of federal dollars come back to our communities, and how many representatives we have in Congress for the next decade. This is our chance to shape the future. Westchester wins when everyone gets counted.

Completing the Census is simple and can be done in more than a dozen languages.

You can get more information or respond online at 2020Census.gov

More information is also available at planning.westchestergov.com/initiatives/census-2020



In closing, I'm proud that Westchester County has been able to respond quickly and decisively to the challenges we've faced so far in 2020. That is in large part due to the County's dedicated workforce, including our staff at the Board of Legislators. They have displayed remarkable resilience, determination and commitment, adjusting on the fly to entirely new ways of conducting the people's business. Thanks to them, we have been able to continue to provide the people of Westchester with essential services and resources necessary to confront these challenging times.

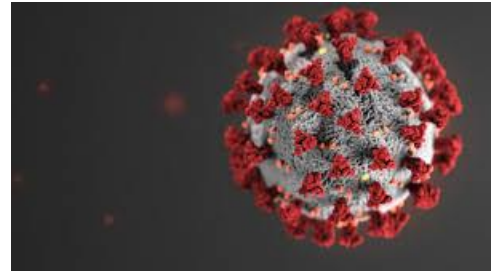
The work of responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic has only just begun. In the coming months, we will be dealing with COVID-19 impacts that we know — like the effect of lost revenue on the County's budgets — and those that we cannot foresee.

But your Legislators and our staff will be here, sleeves rolled up, masks on, to make sure that the people's work continues to get done.

Benjamin Boykin II
Chairman of the Board

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Worked with elected officials at all government levels to implement the appropriate safeguards: coronavirus testing, expansion of hospital capacity, changes to mass transit, access to personal protective equipment for first responders, and enforcement of mask wearing and social distancing
- Continued to remain open with limited staffing and best practices for health and safety
- Conducted business in compliance with the State's Open Meetings Law and Executive Orders from the Governor utilizing the Board's new internet and videoconferencing technology
- Provided important information and resources to the public through daily E-News
- Enacted property tax relief measures by extending deadlines for taxpayers facing COVID-19 related hardship and slashing late payment penalties for all property taxpayers
- Enacted critical budgetary measures including reallocating \$10 million earmarked for the County's reserve fund, and reducing spending by \$11 million by bonding for certiorari repayments and annual pension contribution costs
- Provided a Voluntary Separation Program available to most County and Board employees as another cost savings opportunity



POLICE REFORM

- Sent letter signed by all members of the Board of Legislators to Minneapolis officials urging justice for George Floyd
- Supported State legislation to change laws that shielded police disciplinary records
- Legislators appointed to County Police Board and to County Executive's Police Reform and Reimaging Task Force
- Preparing to review police reform plan pursuant to Governor's Executive Order
- Will hold open committee meetings and convene public hearings to vet the reinvention plan before voting on its adoption



REPAIRING OUR ROAD AND BRIDGES

- Boston Post Rd. Bridge in Rye
- Louisa St., North Division St., and Charles Point Ave. in Peekskill
- Central Westchester Parkway
- Westchester Ave. in White Plains
- Union Ave. in Harrison
- Park Ave. in Harrison to Rye
- Lincoln Ave. in Pelham
- Palmer Rd. & Tuckahoe Rd. in Yonkers
- Cox Ave., Broadway, and County Airport Access Rd. in North Castle
- Willett Ave. in Port Chester
- Hardscrabble Rd. in North Salem
- Commerce St. in Mount Pleasant



IMPROVING OUR PARKS

- Reconstruction of Memorial Field in Mount Vernon approved
- \$5 million for North & South County Trailways
- Kensico Dam Plaza and Mountain Lakes Park Dam projects
- Hilltop Hanover Farm & Environmental Center infrastructure repairs
- Rehabilitation of buildings at Lasdon Park and Lenoir Preserve
- Repairs to Pat Henry Field in Mount Pleasant



UPGRADING OUR WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

- Wastewater treatment plant roof and sluice gate replacements in Blind Brook, Mamaroneck, Peekskill, Port Chester, and Yonkers
- Sewer and septic system modifications in Harrison, Ossining and Bedford
- Pump station repairs in New Rochelle and Yonkers
- Rehabilitation of Yorktown Maintenance Facility and improvements to Central Maintenance Facility in Yonkers

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Replacement of 108 Orion V 40-Foot diesel buses with hybrid models
- Purchase of two all-electric buses and construction of electric bus charging station
- Installation of additional electric vehicle charging stations in County parking facilities
- Rehabilitation of the Material Recovery Facility & Transfer Station in Valhalla to include the design and construction of a food scrap composting and education center
- Purchase of additional vehicles to deliver food scraps for processing throughout the County
- Resolution to create a formal plan to reduce County's greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint



ELECTIONS 2020

- Created Election Information Gathering Task Force to issue August report of recommendations to the BOE for the November general election
- Held public hearing on July 8 to receive commentary from constituents about the June 23rd primary
- Will hold committee meetings to hear testimony from experts about improvements needed for November elections
- Scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting to hear from Board of Elections Commissioners



OTHER ACTIONS

- Unanimously passed resolution supporting NYS elimination of the "Pink Tax," in which similar goods and services are routinely priced higher when they are marketed to women
- Passed legislation to protect wild and exotic animal by prohibiting their appearance at circuses and similar shows
- Launched a reconstituted Minority Affairs Task Force
- Supported State legislation to create Nuclear Generating Station Decommissioning Oversight Board; asked Nuclear Regulatory Commission to open hearing regarding planned transfer of Indian Point power plant to decommissioning company