



Westchester County Legislator
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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2023/24 Newsletter



Legislator Catherine F. Parker

District 7 ~ Mamaroneck, Rye, Larchmont,
 part of New Rochelle, part of Harrison
Chair, Human Services, Human Rights & Equity



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope my annual newsletter finds you all well, and enjoying the start of the New Year! As 2023 is now in the proverbial rearview mirror, I want to recap some of the work that went on at the Board of Legislators and what was accomplished. Our two chief responsibilities are appropriating funds and setting policy so you will see a recap of budget highlights for 2024 and legislation that I think you will find meaningful. Bear in mind, these are the highlights and there is much work that happens to assist constituents with issues that intersect with government. I want to thank my Legislative Aide, John Filiberti, for once again answering many of your calls and emails connecting residents to resources. In addition, we have held several meetings this year, some in person and some that were virtual to provide residents with information on opportunities to learn about programs for economic and workforce development, making sustainable and cost-effective changes to your home, how government at all levels can work together to best serve, and finally a budget hearing so that you can share what you wanted to see prioritized as we planned for the year ahead.

I look forward to working for you as we start a new term. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions, needs, or thoughts.

Sincerely, *Catherine F. Parker*

Some Highlights of Legislation Passed in 2023

TAX EXEMPTION FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE MEMBERS Law – This law authorizes a 10% exemption of county taxes to volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance service members who have served at least two years.

- **ACCESS TO COUNSEL** – this ensures legal representation to household tenants facing eviction and other covered proceedings when the household’s annual income is at or below 300% of the federal poverty line or 60% of the County’s Area Median Income.
- **TRUTHFUL DISCLOSURE ACT** – establishes an effective mechanism for transparency and accountability of our elected county officials
- **LEAD FREE PARKS ACT** – Residents will be drinking clean water at our county parks
- **SCHOOL BUS STOP-ARM LAW** – the County is authorized now to install monitoring systems on school buses to catch and ticket vehicles that fail to stop for a school bus’s red visual signal and stop-arm
- **THE RENEWABLE ENERGY DATABASE ACT** – to empower municipalities by providing access to a database that assists in siting renewable energy infrastructure
- **THE EQUITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION ACT** – A recognition of the harm caused to certain minority communities by policies over many years that creates a need for environmental justice

There are thousands of dollars in
UNCLAIMED FUNDS currently being held
 by the NYS Comptroller’s office.



Visit <https://ouf.osc.state.ny.us/> to verify if you have money waiting and, if so, file a claim!

The Importance of Signing Up for My Office Emails

There is nothing that can make my day as special as receiving an email from a constituent saying that they had found a good job attending a job fair that I had emailed information on attending. During the course of the year, we have sent out important notices on a regular basis. Unlike political emails, these government emails don’t come with a request for a donation! Many of the announcements are also provided in Spanish.

Topics have included:

- Job Opportunities
- New Affordable Housing Lotteries
- Childcare Scholarships
- Severe Weather Preparation
- TSA Pre-Check Enrollment Event at Westchester County Airport



Sign up at
Westchesterlegislators.com/subscribe-to-district-7-enews
 or scan the QR code.



At Heimat NY, a local distillery of fine and delicious liqueurs with owner Ute Londerigan and Senator Shelley Mayer

BOL Has Begun Its Review of the Proposed Land Swap for Westchester Joint Water Works to Build a Filtration Plant

As of this writing, the Board of Legislators has held three public meetings to review the proposed land swap with Westchester Joint Water Works (WJWW). A very brief background - WJWW is owned by the municipalities of the Town of Mamaroneck, Village of Mamaroneck, and the Town of Harrison. Residents in those communities as well as Larchmont and the City of Rye and municipalities outside of my legislative district are also receiving drinking water from WJWW. In all, up to 100,000 county residents depend on WJWW to provide clean, safe drinking water.

In 2019, the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency along with the New York State Supreme Court determined that a filtration plant was needed to treat for Haloacetic Acids, a naturally occurring bi-product of the decay of organic material, but at high levels have been linked to an increased risk for cancer. A water flushing process is currently in place to address this risk.

When WJWW wanted to build on their own land they faced multiple legal challenges from a neighboring developer. The local planning board never completed the SEQRA process, and without that no further action could be taken to construct the filtration plant. WJWW came to Westchester County

and proposed the land swap to allow an unused section of Westchester County Airport to be used for the site.

The Board of Legislators is committed to a thorough and transparent process. We hope to have our review completed in early 2024. I can tell you that the two main groups of people opposed to the land swap, the members of the Quaker Meeting House and residents of Purchase, have been availing themselves of speaking opportunities.

To learn more, please visit the Westchester Board of Legislators website to watch and participate in upcoming public meetings on this subject. ■

And Now News Regarding the 2024 Budget...



County Executive Latimer's proposed budget demonstrated again that when Westchester County adheres to good governmental fiscal management we can achieve our goals of serving the one million plus residents without cutbacks or gimmicks to keep the operating budget with a zero percent increase. No borrowing to pay pension costs, no borrowing to cover tax certiorari challenges, no use of borrowing for short-term purchases that should come out of operating expenses, no one-shot sale of assets to balance the 2024 budget. After six long years, credit rating agency Fitch has restored Westchester to a Aaa bond rating.

Programs for 2024 that I think residents of my district will appreciate will include mattress recycling events and curbside textile recycling. Our food scrap diversion program has really taken off. Twenty five municipalities are currently participating, and we have successfully diverted over 2,200,000 lbs. of food from the incinerator to a composting facility. New composting facilities in Cortlandt and White Plains have reduced the carbon footprint even more.

Maybe most exciting of all is the funding of a new position for County Government - Flood Czar! Together, with additional funding for the Village of Mamaroneck's Army Corps of Engineers project, Murray Avenue in the Town of Mamaroneck for rightsizing stormwater drains when the county repaves, and money for the Village of Mamaroneck and the City of Rye to study additional flood mitigation options, our Flood Czar will also be interfacing with residents to help connect them to resources and information.

The 2024 budget was not all good news though. The Westchester County Board of Elections is going to replace all the machines that were purchased

just four years ago. If you were my constituent then you might remember that I shared concern for the Dominion ICE voting machines, and unfortunately, it seems I was correct that \$13 million dollars was wasted.

We also have to plan in the event that New York State pushes more of the cost of Medicaid onto counties. It is possible that New York will hold on to more of the federal share which could cost Westchester residents in the tens of millions of dollars.

Our special districts which cover refuse and sewer for District 7 are seeing significant tax increases. The sewer districts have had to comply with the Clean Water Act and have been under a consent decree for the last decade. The required infrastructure upgrades have cost the county taxpayers plenty, and we continue to pay that debt service.

Lastly, we are fortunate in Westchester to have many nonprofit organizations that help Westchester residents. The Board of Legislators oversees about \$5 million in contracts to organizations that provide services such as legal services, workforce development, childcare, domestic violence services, mental health clinics, and digital equity. With the County Executive we were able to budget an additional three percent over last year. That wasn't what they asked for, but what we felt we could do. ■



Top: At the Interfaith Diversity Breakfast with Colleagues Bottom Left: At the Signing of Environmental Laws Package at Saxon Woods Bottom Right: Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Westchester Day School and the State of Israel