



Westchester County Legislator
CATHERINE F. PARKER
Proudly Serving the 7th District



800 Michaelian Office Building
 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
 White Plains, New York 10601
 (T) 914-995-2802; (F) 914-995-3884
 Parker@westchesterlegislators.com

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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2024/25 Newsletter



Legislator Catherine F. Parker

District 7 ~ Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Rye
 Chair, Committee on Appointments

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope my annual newsletter finds you all well, and that you are enjoying the start of the New Year. As 2024 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 funding highlights and legislation that I think you will find meaningful. Bear in mind, these are the highlights; much more work is done behind the scenes to help constituents solve real problems. I want to thank my Legislative Aide, John Filiberti, for once again answering many of your calls and e-mails connecting residents to resources. In addition, we have held several meetings — both in person and virtual — to inform residents about key programs. Topics included economic and workforce development, making sustainable and cost effective changes to your home, and finally a budget hearing so that you were able to share your thoughts with myself and our community.

I look forward to continuing my work to best represent you in the coming year. 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 2024

- **SOURCE SEPARATION AMENDMENT** – This updates the law to require separate waste and recycling bins in public areas and clarifies food composting rules. By streamlining reporting and aligning with New York’s hazardous materials laws, it simplifies recycling and waste management for business.
- **FUNDING PROVIDED FOR NEW MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC** – A mental health clinic will be reopened in White Plains with \$1 million of county funds. This clinic will provide essential support for individuals with urgent mental health needs, helping to meet the increasing demand for services.
- **SAFETY MEASURES FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT** – Free home locks and security cameras will be provided to survivors of domestic violence. Legislation was developed with the Westchester County Office for Women, Pace Women’s Justice Center, and the County Executive’s Office.
- **SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS** – Now Social Security income can be excluded from eligibility calculations, making more seniors eligible for relief. This change approved by New York State, provides greater financial support to seniors with fixed incomes.

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 NYS Office of Homes and Community Renewal provides grant assistance to qualifying homeowners whose homes were damaged by Hurricane Ida.

Available assistance will cover reimbursement for the cost of repairs and grant funding for flood mitigation improvements.

The application will be open until January 17, 2025.

Applications can be submitted at:
hcr.ny.gov/general-ida-programs

The Importance of Signing Up for My Office E-mails

Nothing makes my day more than receiving an e-mail from a constituent who found a great job after attending a job fair I shared information about. During the course of the year, we have sent out important notices on a regular basis. Unlike political e-mails, these government e-mails don’t come with a request for donations! 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.

Larchmont's Alma Field Receives \$2.2 Million from the County

County Executive George Latimer and I were very pleased to be able to provide significant funding to enhance Alma Field at Flint Park in Larchmont. As a great example of a public private partnership, residents also chipped in with their donations to pay for new lighting, seating, picnic areas, and scoreboards. Having once been county property, we were able to address the longstanding problem of stormwater flooding of the field with a new drainage system. ■



District 7 Residents are Reunited with their Unclaimed Funds

Partnering with the New York State Comptroller's office, several of my colleagues and I held a workshop at the Mamaroneck Town Center to help residents reclaim their money. It was a huge success, with over 100 residents coming, filling out the paperwork, and finding their lost funds. In addition, thousands more followed the directions to the Comptroller's website included in the letter that I sent, and received their money. ■

The Board of Legislators Approved the Proposed Land Swap for Westchester Joint Water Works to Build a Filtration Plant

After months of diligent review, the Board of Legislators approved the proposed land swap with Westchester Joint Water Works (WJWW) in April. 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, also receive drinking water from WJWW. In all, up to 100,000 county residents depend on WJWW for 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 by-product of the decay of organic material that, at high levels, has been linked to an increased risk for cancer.

When WJWW wanted to build on their own land, they faced multiple lawsuits 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. Time was of the essence, as fines and penalties were accruing going back to 2019. As of this writing, the three municipalities settled and paid \$1.25 million to the EPA. WJWW has until July 2029 to build the plant and have it operational. ■



Help with Childcare Costs

The average cost of childcare in Westchester has reached almost \$15,000 annually. Fortunately, for many working moms and dads, we started a childcare scholarship program a couple of years ago to help cover what is often the second biggest expense for families per month. Income up to \$92,120 for a family of three or \$111,000 for a family of four can qualify for 50-60% from the WestchesterWorks program administered by the Child Care Council. The Board of Legislators has ensured that this program is fully funded for 2025. If you would like more information, e-mail scholarships@cccwny.org or visit www.childcarewestchester.org. ■



The 2025 Budget Has Passed

County Executive Latimer's proposed budget demonstrated once 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 2025 budget. After six long years, credit rating agency Fitch has restored Westchester to a Aaa bond rating.

The one bit of bad news is that our special districts which cover refuse and sewer for District 7 are seeing significant tax increases. To put it into perspective, for a house that pays approximately \$20,000 in property tax, this may cost you an additional \$100. This increase is due to the debt service for infrastructure improvements that totalled almost \$750,000,000 for the Sound Shore. Let's remember the state of the Long Island Sound fifteen years ago when litigation eventually led to a consent decree to force municipalities to make these needed improvements. It was filthy with large schools of fish dying from a lack of oxygen. Beach closures happened more frequently because of sewage overflows. It is significantly better today because of the work that was done. At the end of the day, most of us will probably agree that a clean Long Island Sound is worth it, and we look forward to a day when we can even enjoy local shellfish again.

WESTCHESTER COUNTY
2025 BUDGET

Legislator Catherine Parker, joined by Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, held her Annual Westchester County Budget Meeting with District 7 Residents on November 26, 2024.

WATCH THE MEETING AT:
vimeo.com/1035647230

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Finally, we are fortunate to have many nonprofit organizations as partners in helping Westchester residents. Generally they provide excellent service, and at a reduced cost. The Board of Legislators oversees about \$5 million in contracts to organizations that provide services such as legal counsel, workforce development, childcare, domestic violence services, mental health clinics, and digital equity. We did not have to cut any of their funding. ■

Lastly, My Thanks to County Executive George Latimer and Wishes for Continued Success

For the last seven years, I have had the honor and privilege of working closely with County Executive Latimer. I have seen his leadership on so many levels – getting the county back in good financial shape, seeing us through a once in a lifetime pandemic, focusing on the kitchen table economics for residents by cutting property taxes, creating opportunities for affordable housing, giving bus fare holidays, childcare subsidies, and economic development grants for small business. In addition to the broad strokes, I saw County Executive Latimer direct his team to work with the Army Corps of Engineers and New York State DEC to start in earnest the first phase of the ACE project for Mamaroneck to address the most serious flooding in Westchester County. Time and time again, I saw how Westchester residents benefitted from his unparalleled leadership. With that I extend a heartfelt thanks to our friend, George. I wish you only the best for your first term in the U.S. House of Representatives. ■

