

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 2022/23 Newsletter



Nancy E. Barr

District 6 ~ Harrison, Rye Brook, Port Chester
Vice-Chair of the Board



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

This past year, I was honored to be unanimously elected by my colleagues to Vice Chair of the Board of Legislators. With the election of Catherine Borgia as Chair, this marked the first time in the Board's history that both positions were held by women! It has been exciting for me to be part of this forward-thinking leadership team that is committed to improving the health, safety and well-being of all County residents.

A large focus for the Board in 2022 was helping Westchester residents recover from two years of pandemic set-backs. Among other things, we used funding from the Federal government to help create child care scholarships so that parents could get back to work, and we funded an innovative Landlord Tenant Assistance Program (LTAP) to benefit both landlords and tenants. LTAP enables eligible landlords to receive grants from the County to invest in needed repairs and infrastructure, with the condition that they maintain reasonable rental rates for 10 years.



Historic Female Leadership Team

On the legislative side, the Board passed more than ten significant bills, addressing health, safety, the environment and more — keep reading for more details!

As gratifying as all of this work is, the part of my job I love the most is meeting with you, my constituents, and with residents throughout the County. I love to hear about your successes and struggles first-hand, to develop a deeper understanding of your needs, and to brainstorm ways the County can make a difference for you, your families and your businesses.

Please feel free to contact me via e-mail at Barr@westchesterlegislators.com, or via phone at 914-995-2834. My Legislative Aide Debbie and I love to hear from you!

Best wishes for a happy, healthy 2023!

Warmly, *Nancy*



Rye Brook Fitness Initiative Together (F.I.T.)

People with Disabilities

The Westchester County Advisory Council for People with Disabilities, which I helped create pre-COVID, has been having an impact. In 2022, I accompanied the group on a tour of the Westchester County airport to explore ways to make the airport more user-friendly for this community. One of the many outcomes of our visit was the decision to train all customer-facing personnel about best practices for interacting with people with autism, to provide a more positive experience for all.



Advisory Council on People with Disabilities Tours Airport



CE Latimer signs Anti-Hate bill



AJC Diversity Breakfast w/Lt. Governor Delgado

Confronting Hate and Bias

Hate and bias incidents, even if they don't rise to the level of a crime, have a traumatic impact on the victims, as well as on the community at large. The Hate Incident Reporting Law closes a gap in reporting by collecting data; the County will be better able to develop solutions if it has accurate information. The law requires local municipal police departments to report to the Commissioner of Public Safety all incidents involving conduct which is or appears to be motivated by a person's actual or perceived membership in a protected class. This includes both bias-related crimes and bias-related incidents which don't rise to the level of a crime.

Tax Relief and Fiscal Responsibility

To help mitigate higher fuel costs, the Legislature voted to institute a sales tax cap on gasoline for this past summer, and voted to waive County sales tax on home energy this winter, from December 1, 2022 through February 28, 2023. We also passed the Senior Citizens & Persons with Disabilities Home Owner's Tax Exemption Law to expand property tax relief for Westchester's low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities. This law increases the income cap from \$29,000 to \$50,000. Additionally, the County's 2023 Operating Budget lowers the Westchester property tax levy for the 4th year in a row. This was done without borrowing money for operating costs, and with an increase to the fund balance.

Responsible fiscal management is reflected in our ratings—Moody's has reaffirmed the County's bond rating at "Aa1" with a "Stable" outlook. Fitch Ratings assigned an "AA+" rating to bonds issued by the County and upgraded our Rating Outlook to "Positive" from "Stable," and Standard and Poor's issued an AA+ rating with a "Stable" outlook.



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Health and Safety First

The Legislature passed multiple bills in 2022 focused on improving the health and safety of Westchester residents:



SAFE ACCESS FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE – The right to access reproductive health care and obtain reproductive health care services is protected by law. The right to peaceably protest and express one’s views is also an essential right. The Reproductive Health Care Facilities Access Law protects

health care workers and patients seeking medical treatment from being obstructed from entering or exiting a reproductive health care facility. This law creates a no-harassment zone around the facility, while still protecting the right for others to peaceably protest.

SUICIDE PREVENTION – Twenty-five percent of 18-24 year-olds in the U.S. report having seriously considered suicide in the past month. Over 50% of completed suicides nationwide involve firearms. To help address this problem, the Legislature passed the Firearm Warning Label Law. It requires any individual or business engaged in retail firearm sales to post a

warning informing purchasers of the risks associated with firearms, so buyers can make educated decisions about owning and storing guns.

FOOD SAFETY – Food allergies are a recognized public health crisis, and most food allergy reactions are triggered by food consumed outside the home. The Food Allergy Restaurant Safety Bill enhances food allergy awareness and training at food service establishments to help prevent allergic reactions. This law requires Westchester establishments to provide preventative training for food preparation and service, and to post signs with specific information for consumers.

Environment

MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE – The Flood History Disclosure Law requires landlords to provide tenants with a flood history disclosure prior to the signing of a lease (there are NYS laws in place which cover disclosure for home purchases). This serves as a safety net for both lessor and lessee. Recently, significant storms and major flooding events caused flooding in basement apartments, with water rising over 5 feet in some cases. These apartments were cleaned up and rented out to new tenants, who were unaware of the property’s propensity for life threatening flooding.

ENVIRONMENTAL BOND ACT OF 2022 – Prior to the November election, the Board unanimously voted to pass a resolution in support of New York’s Clean Water, Clean Air, Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022. Residents of Westchester County will benefit from this Bond Act, which NY voters supported in November 2022.

Westchester County Airport

After a break due to COVID, the process to develop a Supplemental Master Plan for the airport has resumed. Multiple public hearings, with both in-person and virtual attendance, were held throughout the County to enable residents and other stakeholders to provide input. Some residents and business owners spoke about the economic benefits of the airport; the majority of speakers voiced concerns about noise, pollution,



home values and quality of life. All of this input will be taken into account as

the plan is developed. In my roles as Vice Chair of the Board and Member of the Westchester County Airport Advisory Board, I remain committed to a vision for the airport that will meet the future needs of our residents, while curtailing expansion and protecting the environment. Both the Board of Legislators and the Airport Advisory Board continue to do due diligence on matters concerning the airport.

Leveling the Playing Field

In May 2022, the Legislature passed the Salary Range Transparency Law, which prohibits employers from posting job listings without minimum and maximum salary information. This law builds upon a prior, recent law which bans employers from requesting salary history of applicants. Both laws are intended to prevent employers from using salary history to perpetuate gender and racial pay disparity. This new requirement will provide more transparency around salary ranges and level the playing field for negotiating pay, to ensure job applicants are paid a fair salary based on the position.



PHOTO GALLERY



Diwali Festival of Lights Celebration



Launch of Mobile Mental Health Unit



FAFSA Boot Camp at PCHS



Presiding over Redistricting Public Hearing



Harrison Public Library Reading Garden



Cancer Support Team Health Awareness Lunch



Madison's Niche Grand Opening



Summer Intern Visits Hilltop Hanover Farm



Supporting Westchester Medical Center Nurses



Harrison Veterans Day Commemoration