



Westchester County Legislator
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2022 Legislative Highlights

Reproductive Health - A law creating an increased buffer zone to protect patients from harassment when seeking care at reproductive health clinics.

Gun Safety - A law providing warning labels at gun shops and in the gun permit application process regarding the increased risk of injury and accidental death with gun ownership.

Food Allergy - A law requiring food allergy training for restaurant staff as well as related signage.

Tax Relief for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities – Legislation which raises the income tax cap to make it easier for seniors and disabled residents to qualify for reduced property taxes.

Salary Range Transparency - A law requiring businesses to include a salary range when posting employment opportunities.

Hate Incident Reporting - A law requiring police departments to forward information regarding hate incidents to the Commissioner of Public Safety. These incidents will also be tracked by the County’s Human Rights Commission.

Flood Disclosure - A law requiring landlords to disclose flood history to prospective tenants.

Extension and Expansion of a Telecommunications Master Plan - An agreement providing funds to area municipalities for the documentation of area cellular coverage needs.

Sewage Improvements for Mount Kisco - Replacement of sewer infrastructure and updates to the Mount Kisco pump station.

Redistricting – As required by law, based on the latest census and current laws. Details are available at westchesterlegislators.com/redistricting2022.



Celebrating Pride with Bedford Lewisboro Pound Ridge Pride at Lewisboro Town Park

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2022/23 Newsletter



Legislator Erika Pierce

District 2 ~Bedford, Lewisboro, Mount Kisco, North Salem, Pound Ridge, Somers
Chair, Environment, Energy & Climate



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As we near the end of my first year, I wanted to take the opportunity to highlight my key accomplishments, share some of the efforts I’ve made on behalf of our district, and update you on the issues ahead. **It has been a productive year, and working in support of the communities I was elected to serve has been a tremendous honor.**

For the 2022-23 Legislative term, I chair the Boards’ Committee on Environment, Energy & Climate, serve as the Vice Chair of the Health Committee, and serve on the Budget, Public Safety, Appointments, and Human Services, Human Rights & Equity committees. I also serve as the liaison to the Agricultural Board, the Westchester County Soil and Water District, and the County’s LGBTQ Advisory Board. It has been a busy first year!

My office is open and available to residents and organizations throughout the district and we have done our best to support those who have reached out on a variety of issues, including utility bill problems, housing and mental health crises, access to supplies and medical care, and ParaTransit issues. We also support our many Ambulance Corps and Fire Departments, provide grant application and other support to our municipalities and non-profits, and coordinate with colleagues at the state level on issues such as repaving Route 35. I have hosted in-person events in our parks, a community NARCAN training, as well as online forums on issues including community mental health and police diversion, and coexisting with coyotes and other wildlife. I have presented to all six town boards and have sat down with the various supervisors and the mayor in our district. I have held and/or attended Coffee & Conversations in many communities and have attended dozens of events across the district. I look forward to more of these opportunities next year.

We put a great deal of effort into our weekly e-blasts, updating the district on legislative issues and opportunities available for residents, including community events. **If you are not receiving these emails and would like to, please contact my office or scan the code on this newsletter.**

I look forward to continuing my work next year. I appreciate your support and will do my best to continue earning your trust and confidence. And if I may be of any assistance, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at 914-995-2810 or Pierce@westchesterlegislators.com.

Very Truly Yours,



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PICTURED TOP TO BOTTOM: At the 2022 Run the Farm held at Muscoot Farm with Leatherman’s Loop founder Tony Godino & piper Jonathan Henken; marching with officials in Mount Kisco’s Fire Dept. parade; honoring Bedford Resident Rev. Kym McNair with Women’s Advisory Board member Lauren Smith; presenting at the community Narcan training held at Katonah Village Library

The 2023 County Budget & Fiscal Health

I am happy to report that the fiscal health of Westchester County is strong. The county's 2023 Operating Budget lowers the property tax levy for the 4th year in a row, while continuing to invest in our families and the services that matter most for county residents, such as childcare, healthcare and emergency services. We also made headway in our backlogged infrastructure and in replenishing our fund balance. That responsible fiscal management is reflected in our ratings — Moody's

has reaffirmed Westchester County's bond rating at "Aa1" with a "Stable" outlook; Fitch Ratings assigned an "AA+" rating to bonds issued by the county and has upgraded our Rating Outlook to "Positive" from "Stable"; and we received Standard and Poor's AA+ rating with a "Stable" outlook. The New York State Comptroller has updated Westchester's fiscal stress score to "no designation" — the highest category achievable.

The County received \$280,000,000 in

funding from the federal government via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which has been a help as well, with funding allocated to Public Health, Non-Profit Grants, Small Business Development Assistance, Workforce Development, Job Training, Affordable Housing Development & Multi-Family Unit Rehabilitation, and Wastewater Infrastructure. Fortunately, the County has been able to share the benefits of its fiscal health with towns and school districts. ■

Helping Residents & Improving Our Communities

While the county's fiscal health is strong, the global economy is struggling. The county has prioritized helping residents during this period. In October, we passed legislation that makes it easier for seniors and handicapped residents to qualify for reduced property taxes. We have eliminated the sales tax on residential energy — such as home heating oil, propane, natural gas, and electric — on a quarterly basis beginning December 1, 2022. For those in the Community College system, SUNY Westchester Community College has a 0% tuition increase. We continue to expand childcare subsidies, making it easier for families to access needed childcare, and have provided fare holidays for both Bee Line Bus and ParaTransit. The county continues to give unprecedented support for its food pantries and Feeding Westchester. Additionally, over the summer, Westchester had a gas tax holiday.

Meanwhile, here in District 2, I was able to secure over \$160,000 in funds in 2022 for a number of hard-working nonprofits, including The Boys & Girls Club of Northern Westchester, the Mount Kisco Arts Council, Community Based Services, Friends of Karen, and Katonah Classic Stage. For 2023, that figure is higher and includes funds for youth mental health care, support for families of special education students and programming for people with PTSD. ■

PICTURED TOP TO BOTTOM: With students in the Learn to Swim program at the Boys and Girls Club of Northern Westchester; with board members from Katonah Classic Stage



Environmental Committee Updates



Touring Hilltop Hanover Farm

The Environmental Committee has taken up a number of issues, including hazard and flood mitigation, projects addressing climate impacts, "green infrastructure" (including the health of trees

in our county parks), the impacts of invasive species, sustainability, and energy costs. When infrastructure projects come before the Board, we make certain that they include the most up-to-date technologies and data, and utilize current best practices, to help guarantee that our infrastructure will be able to withstand the storms and flooding ahead. We also look to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels. All of this will save the county money in the long run.

I have also introduced new legislation — "Upon Request" — to help remove unneeded single use service items from

our waste stream while helping our businesses save money. Meanwhile, we continue to expand our electric and hybrid fleet.

The skyrocketing cost of energy is of great concern to me, as it is to many of my residents. As Chair of the Environmental Committee, I brought NYSEG and Con Ed to the table to discuss price increases, submitted testimony to the NYS Public Service Commission (PSC), and worked with residents and the utilities to improve billing practices and payment plans. I will continue to do all that I can in the fight for lower energy prices and to help constituents struggling with their bills. ■

Public Safety & Emergency Services

While some communities have seen crime rates increase during the pandemic, Westchester has fared much better and remains a safe place to live. That being said, we continue to work hard to maintain that safety, both in ways seen and unseen, while also working to improve policing to best protect everyone. Ongoing programs include a multi-agency high-risk task force for domestic violence, training for our emergency first responders, and services like the county's emergency helicopter (which has come to the aid of lost or injured hikers in Ward Pound Ridge and Mountain Lakes Park at least 14 times this year).

The creation of a police accountability board, the tracking of hate incidences, and community policing are some of the newest efforts currently underway. Mount Kisco piloted Westchester's new Community Policing program, with the village's own Officer Ramirez taking on that new position in Mount Kisco. Project Alliance, another new program, began its roll out this year. This program sets up regional teams of specially-trained mental health



Addressing school safety issues at Mount Kisco Elementary

professionals that work with public safety and local first responders.

School safety continues to be a focus and priority for all of us. The county trains School Resource Officers (SROs) and provides those officers on a contract basis to our public schools when requested. The county has developed and provides programs to train and practice for active shooter and other hazards in our school buildings, including recent trainings at North Salem High School and Mount Kisco Elementary School. I attended the training in Mount Kisco, and was incredibly impressed by the quality of the program and the benefits that it pro-

vides to our volunteer fire and ambulance departments.

Finally, and on a related note, if the last couple of years has taught us anything, it is how important first responders are to all of our communities, including volunteer first responders. Unfortunately, there is a critical shortage of these volunteers. In the coming year, the county will launch two new programs to support the work of our Volunteer Ambulance Corps, one of which will include additional ambulances to be deployed as needed. In addition, the Westchester County Department of Emergency Services (DES) has developed a program of recruitment and retention incentives for all volunteer emergency services agencies. The program is designed to provide tuition or student loan reimbursement to volunteers for their service. \$250,000 in scholarships were dispensed through the summer, with more since then. We know there is much more work ahead on this issue, and we continue to work towards better solutions for our hard-working volunteers. ■

DISTRICT 2 COUNTY PARKS - INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

District 2 is home to many beautiful County parks, and I am happy to report that progress is being made in updating and improving many of them.

- **Muscoot Farm** - We broke ground on the restoration of the historic mansion and passed a bond act, including \$10.3 million to: build new bathrooms, make improvements to the parking lot, drainage, livestock fencing, and provide other site work.
- **Merestead** - We have completed enveloping the mansion, begun replacement of the bridge, started design work for the historic restoration of the farmhouse, and have stabilized the farmhouse porch.
- **Lasdon Arboretum** - Work on the historic mansion is nearing completion.
- **Ward Pound Ridge Reservation** - We passed a bond act including \$1.6 million to fund: work on the park's dams, remove invasive plants, and do other site work, and have begun the study for the fire tower restoration project.

PICTURED TOP TO BOTTOM: At Muscoot Farm for their Pumpkin Picking Fundraiser; at Merestead hosting a naturalist hike with community members

