



Westchester County Legislator
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Dear Friends and Neighbors:


It has been a very busy year at the Board of Legislators. Much of my time as your legislator has been spent addressing the needs of our aging infrastructure. I've advocated for badly needed repairs to the Ashford Avenue and Warburton Avenue bridges; for river cleanups and stormwater management projects along the Saw Mill and Bronx Rivers; and for an agreement between the County and the Town of Greenburgh, permitting developer-funded safety improvements along Jackson Avenue to proceed.

Overseeing the County budget is a major part of the BOL's job. Last year, we approved a budget that held the line on taxes while preserving vital services like child care for low-income families, our nature centers, bridge and road repairs, and public safety. I hope that we can forge a similar agreement for the 2013 budget.

I appreciate your input. Please send your comments, questions and concerns to me. Together, we'll keep working together to ensure a successful future for our communities.

Sincerely,






Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall 2012 Newsletter



MaryJane Shimsky

Majority Whip

District 12 ~ Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Edgemont,
Greenburgh, Hartsdale, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington

Westchester County's Finances On Even Keel

As we climb out of the worst recession since the Great Depression, Westchester County government is on sound financial footing thanks to prudent fiscal policies.

The County's 2010 budget returned a \$67 million surplus to fund balance, and the 2011 budget returned \$32 million to fund balance. The 2011 budget cut taxes by a historic 2.2% and reduced the size of the County's workforce by 10%, yet saved important jobs in public safety, health, environmental protection and the social safety net. The County also retained its AAA bond rating.

Our 2012 bipartisan budget again avoided tax increases and kept our AAA rating, while saving 187 critical jobs in public safety, public works and our nature centers and parks. The County's fund balance is still at a healthy percentage of annual budget.

The Board of Legislators continues to make wise investments in repairing our aging infrastructure, as well as maintaining Westchester's competitiveness and creating good jobs in the process. We have received hundreds of letters and heard extensive testimony during past years' budget hearings -- testimony to the value of our County government.

As deliberations on the 2013 budget begin, I will continue to value your feedback, and will be happy to answer your questions and address your concerns. ■

Legislator Shimsky Fights for Crucial Repairs to Area Bridges

The Ashford Avenue bridge is the worst County-owned bridge in Westchester, according to the New York State Department of Transportation. When six chunks of concrete fell from the bridge onto the New York State Thruway last June, I called for emergency measures to protect motorists driving under it. Thankfully, the protective netting and planking is finally being installed.

The full rehabilitation project for this critical artery connecting Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry, which will cost in

the neighborhood of \$20 million, may not begin until 2015. I will continue to work with the Administration and all of the stakeholders to move up the date for those repairs, and to assist the affected communities as the project progresses.

Meanwhile, the Warburton Avenue bridge in Hastings-on-Hudson is also in need of major repair. According to the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation, this \$10 million project should begin during the spring of 2013. I will continue to monitor this project as it moves forward. ■



County, Town Near Agreement on Safety Improvements to Jackson Avenue Area



With part of the settlement money won from their lawsuit against the developers of Ridge Hill, the Town of Greenburgh and the Villages of Ardsley and Hastings-on-Hudson agreed to focus on two dangerous sections of Jackson Avenue: the “Y” intersection at Jackson Avenue and North Sprain Road, and the “S” curve bordering Sprain Ridge Park and the St. Andrew’s golf course. This area has seen major accidents, with two fatalities, in recent years.

Moving forward with the needed safety improvements required cooperation from Westchester County, as a narrow strip of land in front of Sprain Ridge Park would be affected. Fortunately, the Town and the County have reached an agreement that will permit these vital safety improvements to move forward. My thanks go to all of the officials, planners and engineers who are making this possible. ■

Board of Legislators Partners with Local Governments to Resolve Longstanding Property Dispute in Ardsley

The former Waterwheel site in Ardsley is on its way to new life, thanks to sustained effort by the Board of Legislators in partnership with local government.

Waterwheel has been vacant for close to 20 years, and plans for workforce

housing at the site have been on hold since 2005. Fortunately, an agreement that will permit the sale of the property for development as owner-occupied affordable housing – including workforce housing for Ardsley – has been approved

by the Board of Legislators. This agreement will reimburse the Village and the Town of Greenburgh \$1.2 million for back taxes, expenses, and changes in the property’s value over time. ■

Board of Legislators Wins Fight for Affordable Child Care in 2012

It is hard to imagine how working parents support children in Westchester County on gross incomes of \$20,000-35,000 per year. Westchester’s child care scholarship programs have been an enormous help, providing these families with access to safe child care, where their children will learn the skills they need to succeed in kindergarten.

Westchester’s child care scholarships used to be the model for governments throughout the region. The County Executive, however, has repeatedly attempted to impose dramatic increases on the parent’s share – a share that averaged \$86 per child per month in 2009 and would have skyrocketed to average \$311 monthly, had his midyear 2012 increase gone unchallenged.

The mid-year increase would have been devastating financially to lower-

wage working parents, and would have endangered children whose parents were forced to turn to unregulated child care.

Just as important, loss of high quality child care would have been costly to taxpayers. Parents forced to quit their jobs would have increased demand for food stamps, welfare and shelters; and the lack of a proper pre-school education for their children could have increased the special education budgets of our school districts.

In November, the Appellate Division, Second Department’s restraining order effectively blocked the mid-year increase for 2012.



Saw Mill River and Bronx River Stormwater Advisory Boards Result in Cooperation, Flood Reduction

The Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board (SWAB), which I established in 2011 with other legislators representing communities along the river, has improved the lives of motorists who rely on the Saw Mill River Parkway, and the many people who live and work along the river’s banks. The Bronx River Advisory Board (BRAB) promises to help those affected by flooding of the Bronx River Parkway. At these monthly SWAB meetings, government agencies and jurisdictions that normally work separately have begun to collaborate in solving our flooding problems.

In an effort to ease the flooding that occurs during heavy storms, SWAB communities teamed with the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and

other stakeholders to remove debris from the Saw Mill River, from culverts and from under bridges. Groundworks Hudson Valley partnered with entities ranging from Scout troops to the federal government to cut invasive vines and replant the riverbank with native trees to soak up stormwater runoff.

Thanks to the relatively dry summer this year, river maintenance has remedied much of the flooding our residents have had to endure. Planning must continue, however, so that we can better withstand wet years as well. To that end, SWAB is planning ahead for annual maintenance, exploring the feasibility of new flood control infrastructure projects, and sharing information on the latest stormwater retention techniques.

The SWAB model of cooperation is now being replicated for Bronx River

communities by the Bronx River Advisory Board (BRAB), and by a county-wide Stormwater Advisory Board that is compiling a survey of flooding problems throughout Westchester. ■



PHOTO GALLERY



❶Dobbs Ferry Eagles Football Team being honored for its fourth State Championship. ❷The Grand Opening of the Nature’s Discovery Playground at the Greenburgh Nature Center. ❸Irvington Lady Bulldogs Basketball Team receiving commendation for its third consecutive State Championship. ❹With Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and BOL Chair Ken Jenkins at the Science Barge. ❺Ardsley High School Academic Challenge Team being honored for winning the Madison Square Garden Varsity’s “The Challenge” Tri-State Championship. ❻A Veteran’s Day lunch draws many of our former servicemen and servicewomen from around the district. This summer, I was able to provide an excursion to Lyndhurst for our seniors.