



Westchester County Legislator
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Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I have considered it my job on the Board of Legislators to make government work properly, at the lowest possible cost to us taxpayers. Over the past three years, we have reduced spending by \$100 million, cut the total County tax levy by 2.2%, and reduced the County workforce by over 15%.

This year's budget was a step backward in all respects. It borrowed too much for operating expenses; funded over \$5 million in patronage at the expense of public safety, civil engineering and environmental professionals; and cut investments in the kind of programs that grow our economy and keep people off social services. Moreover, items that were eliminated from the document passed in December are now, quietly, being added back.

But the budget is short-sighted in one other major respect. I'm sure that none of you have felt that 2.2% cut in County taxes in your property tax bill. That is because we have to stop looking for axes at budget time, and instead use County government as a resource for our budget-strapped towns and villages.

All across our country, County governments are leading the way in government efficiency, using economies of scale to deliver needed services at lower cost. Doing the same here will require intelligence, hard work and an in-depth understanding of what our many layers of government do, how they do it, and why they do it the way they do. I look forward to the day when Westchester County will pursue this difficult but vital work.

Sincerely,

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2013 Newsletter



MaryJane Shimsky
Majority Whip

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

In Big Win For Environment, County Board Passes Hydrofracking Waste Ban

The Westchester County Board of Legislators has passed legislation, which I cosponsored, protecting our environment from the dangers posed by hydrofracking waste disposal.

Gas producers who use hydrofracking techniques often pass on their fracking liquid to local governments, to use on roadways as a de-icing agent or for dust control. Companies even make a selling point of the fact that they give it away, free of charge. The problem is that the liquid contains high levels of toxins and radioactivity. Companies also have tried disposing their waste in sewage treatment plants, which are not designed for this purpose – thereby damaging the facilities while releasing poisons into our water.

Westchester County has joined other counties in New York, such as Dutchess, Nassau and Ulster, in passing a law banning the use, transfer or storage of hydrofracking waste on all roads and treatment plants in Westchester, both public and private. Penalties for violations can include fines of up to \$25,000 and/or 30 days in jail. ■

Legislator Shimsky Advocates For Utility Reform After Superstorm Sandy

Late last year, the Environment and Energy Committee of the Board of Legislators discussed problems with utility companies' response to Superstorm Sandy with officials from Con Ed and NYSEG (their Northern Westchester counterpart). I presented some of the ideas discussed at this meeting to the Moreland Commission at its January 24 hearing at SUNY Purchase. Governor Cuomo established the commission to investigate the utilities' response and recommend reforms.

Given current climate trends, we can count on having to deal with severe storms and widespread power outages in the future. Util-

ity companies are corporations whose main mission is to generate profit for shareholders; they will not implement fundamental change on their own. It is therefore the job of government to make sure that utilities do everything possible to minimize service disruptions to their customers. ■



Board of Legislators Endorses Participation in Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan

Our deteriorating environment will pose the greatest challenge to our future health and prosperity. Westchester County used to be a leader in environmental sustainability, but the executive branch has withdrawn from major initiatives in recent years.

I was proud to bring to the Board of Legislators an opportunity to participate in Governor Cuomo's Regional Sustainability Planning Program, the

first stage in a \$100 million program for developing regional sustainable growth strategies. The Mid-Hudson plan, drafted with the active assistance of Rockland, Orange, Putnam, Dutchess, Ulster and Sullivan Counties, will enable our region to compete for this funding.

By a unanimous vote, the Board of Legislators saw the value of County participation, and endorsed the plan's vision and strategies. ■

County, Town Finalizing Agreement on Jackson Avenue Safety Improvements

Westchester County and the Town of Greenburgh are finalizing details on an agreement that will permit needed safety improvements to proceed on Jackson Avenue and North Sprain Road. If all goes well, the enabling legislation will be passed on the County and State level by the end of June.

My thanks go to the offices of Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti, to the many citizen advocates who have been involved, and the professionals in Town, County and State government who are making this possible. ■

County Bridge Roundup

ASHFORD AVENUE BRIDGE

It took seven months, but the netting and planking needed to prevent a repeat of the June 2012 incident, when chunks of concrete fell from the Ashford Avenue Bridge onto the New York State Thruway, has been completed. Repairs to crumbling concrete on the sidewalks and piers are nearly complete as well.

I am disappointed that we have not been able to move up the timeline for the main repair project, which is not scheduled to begin until March of 2015. I am working to ensure that the County is working with our State and Federal partners to complete the project as quickly as possible, at the lowest possible cost to County taxpayers; and to assist affected communities as the project progresses.

CRANE ROAD BRIDGE

The Crane Road Bridge, a section of the Bronx River Parkway near the Greenburgh-Scarsdale border, is in the process of being replaced. At \$39.4 million, it is the largest project of its kind in County history. From now until project completion in the spring of 2015, there will be only one lane open in each direction, and occasional complete closures will be required for short durations. The Crane Road Exit will be partially closed for approximately one year.

In return for the inconvenience, residents will have a new, safer structure; sidewalks to improve pedestrian access to the Bronx River Parkway reservation; and a new southbound Metro North platform.

My office will participate in County efforts to notify residents of upcoming construction schedules and closures.

WARBURTON AVENUE BRIDGE

Major repairs are scheduled for the Warburton Avenue Bridge in Hastings, with demolition slated to begin in either fall 2013 or winter 2014. The bridge is in serious need of repair, with a score of 4.44 on the New York State Department of Transportation rating scale (a score under a 5 requires immediate attention to more serious problems). Construction will cost approximately \$8 million.

At this point, the County is receiving input from the Village on lighting and safety screen design. Once demolition begins, one direction of traffic will be closed for the duration of the project. To enable fire trucks to reach the southern end of the Village quickly, southbound traffic is likely to remain on the bridge throughout, with northbound traffic detoured.

The need for staging areas under the bridge and for bus detours will result in

the loss of a substantial number of parking spaces. My office stands ready to work with the Village and the County to minimize the inconvenience to our residents, shoppers and businesspeople.

The project should be completed by July 2015. ■

Shimsky Named to Tappan Zee Mass Transit Task Force

Last December, the Governor's Office named me to a 29-member task force to study mass transit options for the new bridge replacing the Tappan Zee.

Replacing the Tappan Zee Bridge provides us with the opportunity to develop the regional mass transit system that our area needs. The combined bridge replacement and transit undertaking will be the single largest infrastructure project in the Hudson Valley, creating thousands of jobs and remaking our region for the better. I'm honored to be included on the task force that will facilitate such important work.

The Task Force has been meeting and analyzing data since mid-December, and is scheduled to make recommendations by year's end. ■

Legislator Shimsky Honored by United Nations Association - USA Westchester at International Women's Day Celebration

I was humbled to be honored, along with United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support Judith Cheng-Hopkins, and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, at the International Women's Day celebration sponsored by the United Nations Association USA Westchester. The Association cited me for my leadership on environmental and women's issues.

In keeping with the day's theme of ending violence against women, my remarks called attention to the intense but successful struggle to renew the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and the efforts to pass New York State's Women's Equality Act. I also discussed the County Legislature's efforts to insure access to reproductive health care and affordable child care. ■



▲Celebrating International Women's Day with UNA-USA President, Marcia Brewster, UN Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support Judith Cheng-Hopkins, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and UNA-USA Program Committee Co-Chair, Brenda L. G. Smith

Efforts of Saw Mill River and Bronx River Stormwater Advisory Boards Continue

Point to Need for Countywide Storm Infrastructure

The Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board (SWAB), which I established in 2011 with colleagues representing communities along the river, has worked very hard at improving 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 joint effort of local communities, State agencies and environmental groups to remove the debris clogging the river at numerous choke points, and to protect the native trees that help soak up stormwater runoff, has made a difference.

As our May 23 storm reminded us, however, improved river maintenance will not be enough when wet springs return and global warming in-



▲Chairing a meeting of the Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board (SWAB)

tensifies. That is why SWAB is exploring the feasibility of new stormwater infrastructure projects, and sharing information on the latest stormwater management techniques.

The Bronx River Advisory Board (BRAB) is confronting a river clogged by silting as well as by woody debris and trash. BRAB has collected evidence of the need for a comprehensive cleanup of the river, and is discussing the best way to promote this effort.

Meanwhile, the work of both SWAB and BRAB has suggested the need for a proper network of functioning stream and rain gauges, to model the likely effects of new stormwater infrastructure projects and the effects of new high-density development on locations elsewhere in our river basins. That is why I have begun advocating for using a portion of our stormwater appropriations to rebuild our storm measurement capacity. ■

PHOTO GALLERY



①Anti-Violence Rally with Congressman Elliot Engel ②With Senior Advocate Abby Connett and Gloria Schlacter during Dobbs Ferry Senior Week ③Packing meals at Westchester County Food Bank ④With Alec Cecil of the Jandon Foundation honoring 2012 Jandon Scholar, Jennifer Robertson ⑤Edgemont Student Mock Legislature ⑥Honoring the 2012 winner of the Intel Science Award, Chloe Wang from Dobbs Ferry, with Principal John Failino, Assistant Principal Candace Reim, and BOL Chair Ken Jenkins