



Westchester County Legislator
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Proudly Serving the 12th District



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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years



Fall 2014 Newsletter



MaryJane Shimsky

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

What Do You Think?

I'd like to know your thoughts about what are often called “pocketbook” issues. Please consider completing the short questionnaire below, and return it to me at:
Legislator MaryJane Shimsky, Westchester County Board of Legislators, 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor, White Plains, NY 10601

1) Generally, what cost of living expenses worry you the most?

☐ Mortgage or Rent

☐ College and Education

☐ Property Taxes

☐ Transportation

☐ Other (please identify) _____

Comments

2) Which financial aspects of living in Westchester deserve more focus from the County Legislators?

☐ Job Creation

☐ Housing

☐ County Taxes

☐ Bridge and Road Repairs

☐ Child Care

☐ Business Development

☐ Flood Mitigation

☐ Sewage and Water Infrastructure

☐ Other (please identify) _____

Comments

3) What keeps you here in Westchester County?

☐ Family and Friends

☐ Employment

☐ Community/Religious Community

☐ Educational Opportunities

☐ Cultural Offerings

☐ Recreation/Open Space

☐ Other (please identify) _____

Comments

(Optional) Name

E-mail

Mailing Address

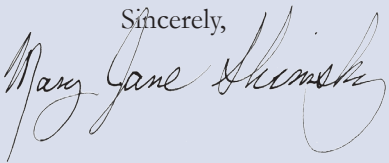
Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I have considered it my job on the Board of Legislators (BOL) to make government work properly and at the lowest possible cost to us taxpayers. This year, I have assumed a new role in improving the way our County government works.

In January I was appointed as chairperson of the Board’s new Infrastructure Committee. The creation of this committee is quite timely, as there is concern about keeping our roads and bridges, lighting, water supply, wastewater treatment and solid waste management operating properly. To do so means following a regular schedule of repairs.

Maintaining our infrastructure is good for our pocketbooks, too. As any homeowner knows, keeping one’s house in good repair costs less money than letting it fall apart and then being forced to make more extensive—and expensive—repairs later on. The present conditions of the Ashford Avenue Bridge and Sprain Ridge Pool, both discussed elsewhere in this newsletter, serve as lessons about what happens when assets are neglected.

We can also save money by reducing our energy and fuel consumption. The County’s electric bills alone total well over \$20 million annually; and our vehicle fleets cost many millions more in gasoline and maintenance. The BOL Infrastructure Committee is working together with the BOL Environment and Energy Committee to develop a comprehensive strategy for energy efficiency. I hope to have progress to report in my next newsletter.

Sincerely,


Tappan Zee Mass Transit Task Force Recommends Bus Rapid Transit

In December 2012, I was appointed to the 29-member task force to study mass transit options for the new bridge replacing the Tappan Zee. After fourteen months of research and deliberations, the Mass Transit Task Force recommended in its final report that a three-pronged bus rapid transit (BRT) system operate along the I-287 corridor, as well as on Route 100 (Central Avenue) and from White Plains to the Westchester Medical Center and other facilities on the County’s Valhalla campus.

Expanding mass transit offerings is absolutely critical if we want to make our County more convenient and affordable for young adults and senior citizens. Mass transit is also an essential part of any strategy to reduce traffic and carbon emissions. ■

Legislators Oppose LG Tower on Palisades

The Board of Legislators approved a resolution in July expressing opposition to LG Electronic’s plan to build a 143-foot tall office building on top of the Palisades. The corporation received a variance from Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, to build the tower about fifty yards from the Palisades Interstate Park—and clearly visible to Yonkers and Rivertowns residents.

The Palisades are a National Natural Landmark and a National Historic Landmark. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has included the Palisades on its 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list. Looking across the Hudson River at the Palisades, as many of us do every day, reminds us that we live in a unique place. We have a moral responsibility to future generations to preserve this natural landmark. ■

Jackson Avenue Safety Improvements Moving Ahead

Westchester County and the Town of Greenburgh are finalizing details on the agreement that will permit crucial safety improvements to proceed on Jackson Av-



enue and North Sprain Road. Moving forward with these improvements—at the “S” curve bordering Sprain Ridge Park and the St. Andrew’s golf course, and at the “Y” intersection of Jackson Avenue and North Sprain Road—will enhance safety in a juncture that has seen many major accidents in recent years. Town Supervisor Feiner and the Greenburgh Town Board have assured me that they are committed to complet-

ing the project before the funding, which is part of the settlement with the developers of the Ridge Hill project, reverts back to the developer. The improvements required County cooperation, as a narrow strip of land in front of Sprain Ridge Park will be affected. At this point, the County and the Town are completing the paperwork for a land swap replacing the affected area with parkland elsewhere in Greenburgh. Thanks to the offices of New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti, the swap has already received the necessary State approval. The Town is on a very tight schedule to complete the safety improvements before the funding expires. I remain committed to helping the Town move forward. ■

Bridge Repair Roundup

Warburton Avenue Bridge: Major repairs began on this Hastings-on-Hudson bridge earlier this year. The project involves replacement of the deck, joints and sidewalks, and major work to the piers. New lighting and safety screening are included in the design. Since work began several months later than originally planned, the summer 2015 completion date has been moved back to November 2015. Fortunately, demolition and construction have been progressing at the expected speed. The bridge was 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 avoid more serious problems.)

Ashford Avenue Bridge: The need for emergency repairs to the Ashford Avenue Bridge between Dobbs Ferry and Ardsley continues. This past winter, an expansion joint on the road surface failed, requiring the installation of metal plating. The BOL Infrastructure Committee has been assured that the joint will be replaced this fall. While there was no structural damage from the fatal accident on July 30, there was damage to the fencing and sidewalk. That repair work should also commence shortly.

I am concerned about the delay in get-

Stormwater Plans Approved to Aid Local Flood Projects

The County is about to enter a new phase in its efforts to reduce flooding. This year, the Board of Legislators has officially accepted Stormwater Reconnaissance Plans for all of Westchester’s watersheds. Under the County’s 2011 stormwater management law, all communities that provided information on flood-prone areas for these reports will now be eligible to seek matching funds from the County for flood mitigation projects.

Since late 2011, the County has budgeted \$5 million per year for such projects, which means that we now have \$15 million to help our communities alleviate their flooding problems. Several communities along the Saw Mill River have already contacted the County Planning Department about potential projects. This is good news for everyone along the Saw Mill, because well-designed projects in one part of the watershed will benefit us all.

ting information about the July 30 accident to the motoring public. Information about the bridge closure was not made available to local governments when residents could have used it to find alternative routes or adjust their schedules. Before the main construction project begins in spring 2015, the County must put in place a better system of communicating with our residents.

Crane Road Bridge: The replacement of the Crane Road Bridge, a section of the Bronx River Parkway crossing the Bronx River and Metro-North Railroad tracks near the Greenburgh-Scarsdale border, is continuing. At \$39.4 million, it is the largest bridge rehabilitation project in County history. From

now until project completion in the middle of 2015, there will be only one lane open in each direction, and occasional complete closures will be required for short durations. 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 Metro North platform.

My office will participate in County efforts to notify residents of upcoming construction schedules and closures for all three of these projects. You may sign up for the updates, or share your concerns about the projects by calling (914) 995-2806, or emailing me at Shimsky@westchesterlegislators.com. ■

Around Our Beautiful County Parks

The Board of Legislators (BOL) spends much of its time overseeing the dozens of Westchester County’s beautiful and much loved parks and recreational facilities. Here is the latest on parks of particular interest to the residents of the 12th District:

Ridge Road Park, Hartsdale: In addition to providing recreation for local residents, this park is a great picnic site, with numerous organizations holding events each year. Last year, the BOL approved bonding to design renovations to the park’s picnic and active recreation areas. Work is expected to include repairs to the picnic areas and pavilions, re-establishment of lawn and field areas, plus completion of a new handicapped accessible playground, infrastructure work and new landscaping.

V.E. Macy Park, Ardsley: Earlier this year, the BOL approved bonding to replace playground equipment and picnic facilities here. The new equipment will conform to current consumer safety and accessibility standards. Some picnic furnishings floated out of the park and into the Saw Mill River during some particularly strong storms in

past years, contributing to our local stormwater management issues. The new furniture will be secured to the ground.

Playland: The BOL is now reviewing the remaining two finalists with the financial resources to make needed investments in the park and revitalize the County’s 280-acre amusement park and recreation facility, a National Historic Landmark. The BOL is calling on the County Executive to negotiate an agreement with one of these finalists in time for the 2015 season. I have been amazed and heartened by how much so many of you love Playland. Your support means a great deal to us in our quest to make the park succeed.

Sprain Ridge Pool: We have just completed the fourth summer without this



much needed recreation facility. A new design for the pool is mostly complete, and has been for years, but the County Executive has refused to proceed with the repair project. This year, the County Executive proposed a \$5 million bond for superficial repairs to the pool. The damage, caused by decades of use and years of total neglect, makes spending millions for caulk and paint a good example of “too little and too late.” The BOL is working to move forward a more feasible plan for returning the pool to its intended use. ■

PHOTO GALLERY



1 At the groundbreaking for Ben’s of Scarsdale 2 Celebrating St. Patrick’s Day with our seniors 3 With Westchester residents at the People’s Climate March in New York City 4 Composting Meeting at the BOL offices 5 Groundbreaking for the Gatekeeper’s House on the Old Croton Aqueduct 6 Presenting a Proclamation to Dobbs Ferry Historical Society President Mary Donovan