



Westchester County Legislator
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Proudly Serving the 7th District



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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall 2016 Newsletter

Legislator Catherine Parker

District 7 ~ Mamaroneck, Rye, Larchmont,
part of New Rochelle, part of Harrison

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As your Legislator representing Westchester County's 7th Legislative District, I am taking this opportunity to update you on recent issues, activities and accomplishments regarding the Board of Legislators. We all know the importance of keeping a watchful eye on government activities, since they play such an important role in maintaining our quality of life.

I also want to make sure that you know about all the county services that are provided each and every day. Westchester County is an efficient model of regional government, providing services that individual local municipalities could not afford to do without there being a regional cost savings (think of the Costco model of buying in bulk). As I have heard from many of you, what exactly do we do? I will set out to give you a quick tutorial!

How we pay for those services is key to our management of this efficient layer of government. I will update you on our county budget, and share with you my thoughts on how well your taxes are spent. I will also share with you my concern for how we keep Westchester affordable for senior citizens, Millennials, young families, and well, ... all of us.

Lastly, as you probably know by now, I consider one of my chief responsibilities to all of the almost one million residents of Westchester, to do whatever can be done to improve and protect our environment so that future generations of Westchester County residents can enjoy the beauty of this rich landscape and our natural waters.

I hope you find this newsletter to be informative and useful. I look forward to hearing your thoughts which you can email to me at Parker@westchesterlegislators.com. Also, I am allotted one snail mail per year. I encourage you to let me know that you would like to receive my email communications, which I send sparingly, but when necessary.

With kind regards,

Catherine F. Parker

2017 Westchester County Budget Remains Unbalanced

Privatizing Westchester County's Airport Does Not Solve the Problem

Earlier this month, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino released his 2017 budget proposal amid legislative review of his newly-proposed 40-year lease agreement for the county airport and another year that the County fell short of projected sales tax and other revenue goals. The County Executive's 2017 budget relies heavily on a front-loaded one-time payment of \$15 million dollars from the Westchester County airport management proposal.

This is the second straight year the County Executive has submitted a budget that relies on one-shot revenue streams and borrowing for operating expenses to make up for the mismanagement of the county as a whole. The Legislature has begun the process

of reviewing the airport management deal, but that process must not be held hostage to the urgency of an unbalanced budget.

This budget continues a practice of borrowing to pay for operating expenses fails to make significant investments in existing, deteriorating roads and bridges and continues to rely on accounting gimmicks and non-recurring revenues from the sale of county assets like the airport.

I applaud the County Executive for not continuing his practice of overly-aggressive sales tax projections but have to take into account that the poor financial planning to do that repeatedly despite warnings in the past is a large reason why we are in the position we are in today.

However, since this budget continues to rely on one-shot revenues and other gimmicks, I think it is a reasonable conclusion that the county budget remains out of balance and does not present a sustainable financial future for the county. Over the last several years various Legislators have presented efficiencies that exist within current county operations that have not been enacted, including millions of dollars in lighting upgrades on county facilities that can be realized very quickly.

We will continue to present those during our discussions of the budget and airport alteration proposals as we find ways to balance this budget without increasing the burden on Westchester taxpayers. ■

What Do You Think?

I'm curious to know your thoughts about some of the issues facing Westchester County. Please tear off this short survey and return it to me at: *Catherine Parker, Westchester County Board of Legislators, 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor, White Plains, New York 10601*

Do you believe the operations at Westchester County airport are?

- Well run and nothing needs to change
- Well run but some slight improvements could be made to improve passenger services
- Poorly run and the airport should be privatized, expanded or sold to generate non-taxpayer revenue for the County and leverage private investment
- Poorly run and the County should change operating vendors without expanding or changing the physical layout of the airport

Would you take county busses if it made commuting out of a train station or stopping at local community centers more of a priority?

- Yes, these bus routes are vital for our local communities, businesses and their employees
- No, the county spends too much money on this service
- Need more information

Do you feel the county does enough to advertise the promotions at Playland each season?

- Yes
- No
- I did not know there were promotions

In general, when you think about local taxes and the services that local government provides, which of the following are you most in favor of?

- More local government services and higher taxes in order to pay for them
- Keep both taxes and services about the same
- Provide fewer services and lower local taxes
- Don't know/No opinion

Update on Major Infrastructure Projects in our Community

In 2016, Westchester County's Capital Projects Budget was \$234,473,000, of which over \$121,000,000 was spent on roads, bridges, parking and recreation facilities and sewer systems. Not only does an investment like this in critical infrastructure create jobs, it is part of the quality of life that makes Westchester such a great place to live. I wanted to give you an update on some of the major projects that have been started in our community.

SAXON WOODS SITE WORK (\$155k)

- New playground and safety surfaces and site work and necessary landscaping

MAMARONECK WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT ROOF REPLACEMENT (\$325k)

- Replacing a roof that was built in 1989

HALSTEAD AVENUE BRIDGE OVER MAMARONECK RIVER (\$820k)

- Repairs to steel girders, replacement of concrete seat, cleaning and painting steel surfaces, epoxy slab cracks and removal and replacement of asphalt wearing surfaces

NORTH STREET AND HAMMOND ROAD REHABILITATION (\$2.43 MILLION)

- Road rehabilitation of North Street between Harrison Avenue and Boston Post Road
- Road rehabilitation of Hammond Rd between North Street and Theodore Fremd Avenue

ANITA AVE BRIDGE, MAMARONECK (\$1 MILLION)

- Rehabilitation of the Mamaroneck Sanitary Sewer District.
- Project will seal the manholes and the lines that have or will be identified as having excessive inflow or infiltration.
- They also will be rehabilitation of the Anita Lane Pipe Bridge which will relieve flooding.

What does Westchester County Government do?

IT KEEPS US HEALTHY AND SAFE.

Our county Department of Health inspects our restaurants and food stores, day camps and beaches providing environmental risk assessment and control. The department works with other regional governments to keep us safe from mosquito-borne illnesses, protect drinking water and air quality by inspecting and regulating entities such as institutional heating systems, public water systems and wastewater facilities. The Departments of Correction, Probation, Public Safety, and District Attorney and County Courts, keep us safe, and ensure due process of law. Our Department of Emergency Services provide training for our municipal fire and EMS departments, emergency operations center and hazard mitigation and disaster recovery. Our Department of Community Mental Health is planning and preparing for an adolescent treatment program in Southern Westchester which will help in the war against opioid addiction affecting

our promising children. Westchester's Department of Labs and Research led by our Medical Examiner works in conjunction with our Commissioner of Health to provide mortuary services and investigations.

Early Intervention Program (EIP) is utilized by many families in the 7th legislative district when they begin to realize their child is speech delayed or is having issues with motor skills. Though a New York State program, it is administered through our county Department of Health. Our therapists work with the child up to the age of three, unless there is a recommendation for further services.

IT BUILDS AND MAINTAINS INFRASTRUCTURE.

Westchester has seven wastewater treatment plants, three of which serve the communities in my district. Concerns over the health and cleanliness of Long Island Sound well over a decade ago, started significant upgrades to those plants. Now, tests have shown significant improvement to water quality, but more work is needed

to be done.

There are many miles of county roads and bridges that get scheduled annually for maintenance. While some roads such as Murray Avenue have been recently repaved, there is more work that needs to be done.

BUT THE NUMBER OF DEFERRED PROJECTS IS STAGGERING.

No doubt, infrastructure is a necessary and essential part of government that costs money. Westchester County has many miles of roads and bridges in District 7. Our Department of Public Works oversees many projects which the Board of Legislators has approved funding.

HOW WE PAY FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT.

The County has an annual budget of around \$1.8 billion dollars. For the last six years, the county property tax levy has been \$548 million dollars. The remainder of our revenue comes from sales tax, mortgage recording tax, other fees, and federal and state aid. ■

Board of Legislators Passes Bill to Eliminate Toxic Heating Oils and Improve Air Quality

Westchester has the dubious distinction of earning an F grade for air quality from the American Lung Association. To significantly reduce particulate matter from soot produced by residual oil, the Board of Legislators voted unanimously to ban the use of #6 oil by July 31, 2018 and #4 oil by July 2020. These dirty oils are burned by large buildings, not single family homes, and the data shows that incidents of hospitalization for asthma and other respiratory illnesses are higher for people, especially children in areas of close proximity to those buildings. As a sponsor of this legislation, I believe we presented a complete picture of the issue, both outlining the health benefits, but also presenting opportunities for building owners to tap into both free and low cost financing to switch to renewable energy. Westchester County has set aside \$7.5 million dollars for Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (QECB) for these type of conversions through our

partnership with EnergizeNY.

The primary consumption of #4 and #6 fuel oil is to provide heat and hot water for both multi-family and commercial buildings. In Westchester County there are there are 178 existing #6 fuel oil tanks serving 137 facilities. There are 328 tanks holding #4 fuel oil serving 261 facilities.

Use of fuel oil grade #4 and #6 are believed to contribute to asthma attacks as well as heart and lung disease. Fuel oil grades #4 and #6 are known to contain high concentrations of sulfur and other contaminants such as heavy metals, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, particular matter and Volatile Organic Compounds.

The prohibition of these toxic fuels is an important step toward setting an example of how our county government can make practical decisions that benefit people's health and well-being. The science and technology available to our communities in the areas of environment and

energy have given us ways to improve the environment without breaking the bank. I'm thankful to Legislator Francis Corcoran (R-Bedford) for being a partner in these efforts and look forward to building on the success we had for others in the future.

This was one of my top priorities that I introduced during my first term on the Board of Legislators and was advanced by the Energy and Regional Efficiencies Committee, which I am the chair of, and the Environment and Health Committee Chaired by Legislator Francis Corcoran.

Abbey Brown, the Clean Energy Project Manager at the Environmental Defense Fund stated, "By phasing out heating oil, Westchester is taking a significant step toward cleaner air for residents throughout the county. EDF was pleased to submit testimony multiple times in support of the bill, speaking to the improvements in air quality and public health we have seen in NYC." ■



This year the Westchester County Board of Legislators honored Michelle Oliveros from the New Rochelle Youth Bureau for Hispanic Heritage Month.



I was honored to give the keynote address focused on economic development at this year's LWV luncheon.