



Westchester County Legislator
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Summer 2017 Newsletter

Legislator Catherine Parker

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



The 2017 County Budget is a Bad Deal for Taxpayers

The 2017 Westchester County budget stretches our operations to the thinnest they have ever been and remains structurally imbalanced. This is according to numerous independent opinions, including the League of Women Voters and the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee.

Once again the County Executive has relied on accounting gimmicks, one-shot revenues and suspect revenue projections, including income from a proposed public-private partnership at the Westchester Airport.

My colleagues and I at the Board of Legislators unanimously passed a resolution asserting a legislative leadership role in issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit other possible opportunities to increase revenue because of widespread dissatisfaction about the way the County Executive's initial proposal was solicited and presented to the board. I voted against the 2017 budget because of the continuing long-standing structural imbalance and fis-



cal irresponsibility.

The 2017 County Budget agreement is "balanced" on the inclusion of \$15 million of revenue related to the County Executive's airport modification proposal and a commitment to utilize \$15 million of fund balance if no airport deal is reached in the coming year. This RFP process is currently underway with a final resolution expected around December of 2017.

Moody's Credit Rating Agency recently released a report which listed three

main factors that may lead to a downgrade of Westchester County's credit rating: additional declines in General Fund balance resulting in material change in reserve, large structural imbalances, and material increases in outstanding debt. These are three of the underpinnings of County Executive Astorino's 2017 operating budget.

As we have seen in surrounding counties, this practice can have very serious fiscal ramifications detrimental to the County's long-term fiscal health. ■

Dear Neighbor,

Thank you for taking the time to read this year's summer update on happenings at the Board of Legislators. As you know, we live in a time when local decisions matter more than ever. That is why I am fighting every day for the values that I was elected to represent. From advocating to ban gun shows on County property to sponsoring a law that would help ensure public safety for ALL residents regardless of immigration status to introducing legislation that will help expand the County's "green" efforts – we are hard at work at the Board of Legislators. All this while managing the desperate fiscal condition that the County Executive has put us in.

I hope you find this newsletter to be informative and useful. As always, I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these and any other matters important to you. My office can always be reached by email at Parker@westchesterlegislators.com or by phone (914) 995-2802.

Best,

Catherine F. Parker



Creating Jobs for Westchester

This past April, I voted to approve the plans for a \$1.2 Billion biotech research facility on the North 60 land in Valhalla. The project will result in nearly 3,000,000 sq. ft. for a tech and science development center which will eventually generate \$9M in taxes and \$7M in rent for the County.

The development consists of the following components and will be built in 3 phases:

- A total of 2.3 million square feet of biotech research space
- Medical offices totaling 400,000 square feet
- A 100,000 square foot hotel; consisting of 100 rooms
- Ground level commercial space consisting of 114,000 square feet
- Children's living science center consisting of 34,000 square feet

My colleagues and I at the Board of Legislators worked hard to devise a comprehensive review process to ensure that the proposed project was the best deal for taxpayers. During the committee process, we negotiated various necessary analyses with the project's developer, screened these potential analysts, and examined the wide-ranging legal, fiscal, and economic reports we received. We additionally made numerous changes to the lease to include labor protections, opportunities for minority and women owned businesses, internships for our local colleges and universities, and environmental protections.

Westchester County is ripe for smart development projects such as this biotech center. It is truly a forward thinking long-term investment for the County's economic future. ■

Fighting Opioid Addiction



Opioid addiction has touched so many in our community. This is why I am proud to co-sponsor two pieces of legislation aimed at fighting back.

The first bill, titled the Prescription Drug Stewardship Program, requires pharmacy chains with more than three stores in Westchester County to become locations to dispose of unused medications. This Product Stewardship Program, which has already been made law in Rockland County, is intended to help stem the tide of widespread drug abuse, particularly of opioids, in Westchester County. The bill also aims to help end the practice of dumping unwanted medications down the drain or in the garbage. These disposed pills often find a way into our waterways and landfills, and have serious environmental repercussions.

The second prong of our approach is holding Big Pharma accountable for their role in this crisis. This legislation directs the Westchester County Attorney to join numerous surrounding counties and file suit against large pharmaceutical companies who have engaged in deceptive marketing of opioid painkillers. Unethical marketing practices can be traced to the over prescribing of and reliance on prescription painkillers – which is often the place where opioid victims get their first exposure. Westchester would join Dutchess, Rockland, Ulster, Nassau, Suffolk, Broome, Erie, Sullivan, and Orange as counties alleging Big Pharma's role in the opioid epidemic. ■

Creating a Policy of Public Safety for All

Earlier this year, I, along with other colleagues, introduced the “Immigration Protection Act” to alleviate many of the concerns surrounding inhumane treatment of our immigrant brothers and sisters. Too often, immigrants fear working with local law enforcement, utilizing vital services which they are entitled to, and are subjected to unfair treatment in our legal system.

The bill, titled the “Immigrant Protection Act”, codifies existing County policy while also drawing from model ordinances put forth by the New York Attorney General's office with the intent to ensure all Westchester County residents are protected.

Provisions to the Immigration Protection Act include:

- Safeguarding confidential information shared with all County departments
- Prohibiting County officers and officials from honoring ICE detainer requests which do not give rise to criminal probable cause
- Ensuring any service provided by a County agency shall be made available to all who are eligible notwithstanding their immigration status
- Protecting the County from liability due to false arrests and imprisonments

We will not tolerate discrimination in Westchester County. Not against anyone, not for any reason. What we are aiming to do with this legislation is ensure that we are not perpetrators of discrimination while staying within the law. Westchester County will not assist in creating a registry, we will not use County resources for unlawful detentions, and we will make sure everyone is represented fairly in our justice system. It is on us to make sure our County departments follow these American ideals. ■



We Need An Accountable Human Rights Commission

Westchester County has seen a disturbing uptick in hate crimes. Since November, I have repeatedly called for an accountable Human Rights Commission and since then have been disappointed in their lack of action.

I, again, call on the commission to:

- Create a database of bias incidents in Westchester
- Develop a plan to work with local municipalities, schools, and police departments
- Create an email & telephone hotline so the public can easily contact the Human Rights Commission to report any incidents.

Database technology, inter-agency communication, and proper public safety officer staffing all take resources. The fiscal issues that our County faces are hindering the response to hate crimes that Westchester can put forth. We must work together with all members of the public to stem this tide; and to do this a greater level of communication from all stakeholders will be needed. ■

Fighting for Westchester Workers

As many of you know, I am a small business owner. As such, I see the good sense of the proposed Earned Sick Leave law for Westchester County I have signed on to as a co-sponsor. The newly offered policy states that all employees shall accrue a minimum of 1 hour of earned paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. Paid sick leave can be used for both physical and mental illness. It can also be used if an employee needs to take care of a sick family member.

In Westchester, 123,000 workers lack access to sick leave and that is unacceptable. This is a policy which is both business friendly and worker friendly by allowing enhanced ability for workers to care for their and their loved one's health while also resulting in lower employee turnover.

This bill has further provisions for businesses with 5 employees or less that allows workers to accrue unpaid - but job protected - sick time. This grants workers' employment security should they need to care for a sick child or loved one. Once these laws are enacted they are popular with both business and workers. Businesses in New York City look very positively on their version of this law that now has been in effect for several years. 86% of employers surveyed in New York City said they had a positive view of the law and 98% said they had seen no instances of abuse.

This benefit, that would make a huge difference in the lives of Westchester residents, currently does not reach 54% of workers in service occupations and 47% in transportation and manufacturing careers. This includes food service workers, bus operators, and home health aides, three groups of workers which can very easily, and rapidly, spread disease.

It is about time we treat all workers in Westchester County with the dignity and respect they deserve. ■



Playland Pool is Saved

Earlier in June, I was pleased to announce the passage of legislation that will finally allow the restoration and rehabilitation of historic Playland Pool to begin. When completed, the residents of the Sound Shore will continue to have the public pool that they have had since 1927.

During the long process to get to this point I made clear that due to costs, a public amenity such as Playland Pool could never be replaced by high priced private club memberships. With uncertainty surrounding other public pool options in Westchester, I held steadfast in my belief that Westchester residents needed Playland Pool to remain an option.

Furthermore, I heard from countless residents & local officials about the serious concerns they had with the any alternative options to the pool. These ranged from quality of life issues such as noise, litter, and rowdiness close to a quiet neighborhood as well as the concern that a new restaurant would detract from efforts made at Rye Town Park with their new restaurant.

I commend my colleagues on the Board and Standard Amusements for their dedication to this piece of Playland history. Stay tuned for construction, opening, and operational timelines for this Westchester landmark. ■

The Perils of Airport Privatization

Last year's announcement that the management of the county airport was up for sale came a surprise to most legislators. This surprise came because of the hole left in the County Executive's fiscally imbalanced budget. The County airport is a prime asset owned by Westchester County taxpayers – and we have seen that the County Executive has had false starts and missteps in executing these kinds of partnerships in the past. Especially deals negotiated in secrecy.



Since that announcement, the Board of Legislators have stepped up to force a transparent Request-for-Proposal process to solicit potential bidders for a partner in airport privatization. We must have a fair and open bidding process that allows us to evaluate all options – even if that means no deal.

With neighboring residents, taxpayers, the environment, and the traveling public all needing to be kept in mind, any deal must be a net gain in every category for it to be worth making.

So far what I have seen from this process when it was attempted elsewhere has me skeptical of what the timeline outlined. I am not interested in rubberstamping any deal that will help plug a hole the County Executive created. ■