



Westchester County Legislator
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Proudly Serving the 12th District



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What County Government Does For You

Two thirds of Westchester County's budget pays for services mandated by the State and Federal governments. Our non-mandated services are also things that our communities cannot do without.

Services provided by Westchester County include the following:

- Transportation infrastructure (including 149 miles of road and 123 bridges, the County airport, the BeeLine bus system, and paratransit for disabled residents);
- Mainline sewers, wastewater treatment, and solid waste disposal;
- The criminal justice system (including courthouses, prosecutors and defense attorneys, probation and juvenile justice services, and the County jail);
- Preschool special education, early intervention, and Westchester Community College;
- Emergency services and County police;
- Parks, nature centers, golf courses, and trails;
- Restaurant inspections, rabies and other disease control;
- Social services (including Medicaid, assistance to needy families, homeless shelters, and child protective services);
- Community mental health services;
- Programs for senior citizens, at-risk youth and victims of domestic violence;
- Land use planning;
- Our elections system.

If you'd like to me to attend a meeting of your local organization to discuss what County government does, please contact my office.



Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2017 Newsletter

MaryJane Shimsky

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



Ashford Avenue Bridge Repairs



The main repairs on the Ashford Avenue Bridge are proceeding ahead of schedule. Traffic already has moved to the newly-constructed half-bridge, and work has begun on replacing the second half.

According to the County's Department of Public Works, all four lanes of the bridge should reopen by June 2018.

Some of you have asked me why the project is taking so long. There are several factors at work, most importantly the need to keep open two lanes of the bridge throughout the entire project, as well as insuring safe passage on the two highways under the bridge. Email me if you'd like further details.

Ridge Hill Settlement Road Improvements Update

The saga of completing traffic safety improvements on Jackson Avenue continues. The project will turn the Y-intersection with North Sprain Road into a T-intersection with a traffic light; and straighten the nearby curve on Jackson Avenue. The area has a history of accidents, including fatalities.

I will continue to work with municipal officials as they seek outside funding to help defray the costs; and to help insure County cooperation with all phases of the project.

Due to quality control problems, the widened section of 9A in Ardsley will have to be repaved. Hopefully that work will take place during vacation season, when traffic is somewhat reduced. ■

WESTCHESTER COUNTY

BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

MaryJane Shimsky
Legislator, 12th District
Chair, Committee on Infrastructure

Committee Assignments:
Environment & Health
Legislation
Litigation
Public Safety & Social Services
Seniors & Constituencies

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It's been another eventful year at the Board of Legislators. My main work has been to keep our infrastructure up and running. Please continue alerting me to problems when you see traffic issues at Ashford Avenue. I do pass on your concerns and suggestions, and they help make life better for everyone.

But even with the progress on our local bridges, the state of our infrastructure is getting worse. We are years behind on County road repairs, for example. Overall, the County's capital projects backlog is approximately \$1.5 billion. In each case, the Board of Legislators has approved the bonds for the project, but the work has not been completed by the relevant Executive departments. Not keeping up with repairs will worsen the financial burden on us taxpayers, as projects become more extensive and more costly; and as the County compensates victims harmed by our crumbling facilities.

Nor has this shortsightedness balanced our budgets. Every year, we borrow more money to cover annual operating expenses. The New York State Comptroller's Office has deemed Westchester County fiscally stressed, and one of the rating agencies has downgraded our bonds. We must find ways to make the most of our taxpayer dollars without mortgaging the future.

To balance the 2017 budget, the County Executive floated a half-baked proposal to privatize Westchester County Airport. We are now undertaking a proper request for proposals (RFP) from potential airport operators, to see if it is possible to privatize the airport in a way that makes sense for the taxpayers, the airport's workforce, the traveling public, the neighboring communities and the environment.

But with the frustrations, come achievements. The Board approved a \$1.2 billion biotech hub for the North 60, an undeveloped property north of Westchester Medical Center, and is currently working on several proposals designed to promote the public health and safety. We also continue to work with our State and municipal partners. I will keep on fighting the good fight, because I care about the people I represent.

I appreciate your input. Please send your comments, questions and concerns to me. Together, we'll build a better Westchester.

Sincerely,

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Legislative Roundup

There are several public health and safety initiatives currently pending at the Board of Legislators. If you have questions or concerns about any of them, please contact my office.

PRESCRIPTION TAKE-BACK LEGISLATION: Last month, I introduced legislation requiring drug store chains to develop a plan for taking back and disposing of unused pharmaceuticals. The bill is nearly identical to one recently passed by Rockland County. It will help reduce the amount of drugs finding their way into our drinking water, and will help stem the rising tide of drug abuse, including abuse of opioids.

The astronomical toll the opioid crisis is taking on our County and our country requires a comprehensive approach. Providing people with safe options for removing no-longer-needed drugs from their medicine cabinets will help keep those drugs from falling into the wrong hands.

TOBACCO 21 LAW: Several colleagues and I introduced legislation raising the age for purchasing tobacco products from 18 to 21. This bill, which reflects the trend in surrounding cities and counties, is a public health measure that will reduce smoking and the harmful effects of nicotine on adolescent brain development.

Gun Show Ban: By a vote of 9-8, the Board of Legislators voted in January 2017 to restore the ban on gun shows on County property. The ban codified the one that followed the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012.

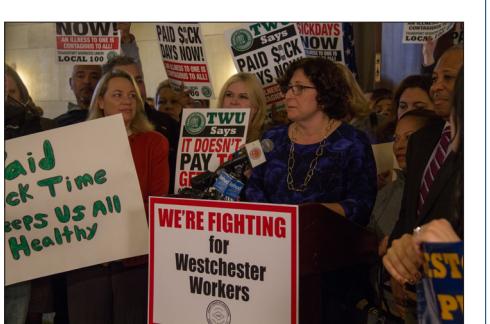
The County Executive vetoed the legislation and allowed a gun show to take place at the County Center shortly thereafter. Observers at the event noted the proliferation of Nazi and Confederate merchandise, as well as items glorifying sexual assault. Our County facilities should be welcoming to everyone, a value not furthered by the sale of deadly weapons and images of hate.

The Board of Legislators does not yet have the 12 votes to override the veto.



IMMIGRATION ACT: This proposed law would codify existing County policy and draw from model ordinances developed by the State Attorney General's Office. When I was an Assistant District Attorney 30 years ago, it was well understood

that turning over undocumented crime victims and witnesses to immigration authorities makes it harder for law enforcement to fight crime. Turning police and other County employees into ICE agents would compromise all residents' health and safety.



EARNED SICK LEAVE: This legislation provides that all employees in Westchester accrue one hour of earned sick time for every 30 hours worked; for businesses with 5 or more employees, the leave would be paid.

This legislation has been a big success in the jurisdictions that have adopted it, not only from the standpoint of worker dignity, but also as a public health measure. Workers who do not have sick time often come to work when ill, thereby spreading disease to fellow employees and the general public. Other benefits include increased worker retention rates. ■

Sprain Ridge Pool and Misplaced Recreational Priorities

Like many of you, I received a postcard from the County Executive this winter, announcing the reopening of the Sprain Ridge Pool complex in July. However, the small print explained that only the little pool will be open this year. I have subsequently learned that the big pool cannot open until 2019 at the earliest -- nine years after we were last able to use it.

While the Board of Legislators was waiting for the County Executive to prepare the bond legislation for the big pool, we were sent a \$24.7 million proposal to build a skating rink and fountain complex at Kensico Dam Park. The Board of Legislators saw that proposal as the waste of money it was, and refused to authorize the funding.

If government is here to do what the people cannot do for themselves, you may wonder why we need a new skating rink when there are so many others in our area, where residents can enjoy a good skate for a few dollars. You may also wonder why swimming pools (including Sprain Ridge and Playland pools) are not a priority, when most Westchester residents cannot afford to build their own or join private clubs. I wonder the same things. ■



PHOTO GALLERY



Fighting senior scams with Senator Gillibrand



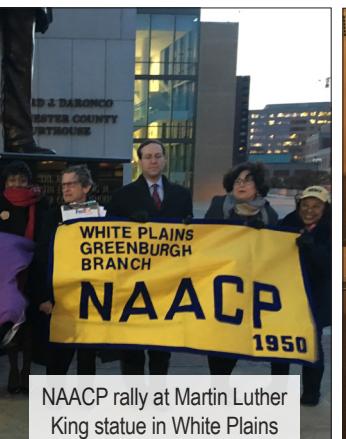
Rallying with community leaders for immigrant rights



Working with Senator Schumer and Mayor Connolly in Dobbs Ferry to save income tax deductions for homeowners



Honoring Ardsley's Mary Keehan during Irish Heritage Month



NAACP rally at Martin Luther King statue in White Plains



Honoring Regeneron Science Finalist, Blake Hord of Dobbs Ferry



Teaching 4th graders at Greenville Elementary School about County government



Honoring the League of Women Voters on the centennial of women's suffrage in New York State during Women's History Month

Shimsky Helps Engineer Historic Agreement for North 60 Biotech Hub

Last month, the Board of Legislators unanimously approved plans for a \$1.2 billion biotech research facility on the North 60 in Valhalla, the largest remaining unused tract of County-owned property. The Committee on Infrastructure, which I chair, was one of two committees leading the Board's review.



When the proposed lease was sent to us, it was lacking the basic economic and legal analyses needed to determine whether the deal was a good one for Westchester residents. Under my leadership, the Board took upon itself the hiring, with developer funds, of consultants needed to perform the analyses; and then the supervision of the consultants. We also made sure that key stakeholders, such as colleges, representatives of minority and women-owned businesses and labor unions were brought into the process; and that environmental protections were included.

Project completion is still a long way off, but the Board's decisions on the North 60 will help provide for Westchester's economic future, with a lease that is fair to our people. ■

Update on the Hudson River Anchorages

Last year, the Board of Legislators joined a broad coalition to fight the United States Coast Guard's proposal for 43 new barge anchorages along the Hudson River. The overwhelming public response against the proposal has delayed the hearing we've been anticipating this spring.

While Westchester's Congressional delegation is fighting the good fight on the federal level, the State Legislature is considering a bill asserting some control over placement of these sites. Many Hudson River communities and 11 County Legislators (including me) have urged the Legislature to approve this measure. ■