



Westchester County Legislator

KEN JENKINS

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Planning for the Future — Renewable Energy

I have proposed Legislation that adds vehicle charging stations in any parking area that is either owned by the County or receives a reduction in County taxes. This legislation is important as we do everything possible to address Global Climate Change.

My Alternative Fuel vehicles law already requires Westchester County purchase vehicles that have a predetermined miles per gallon and reduced emissions as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency. ■

Contact Us!

CITIZENS --- an important branch of county government.

Please attend our board and committee meetings when you can. The Board generally meets twice a month on Monday evenings at 7:00 PM. Committees meet at least weekly.

Visit our website for up-to-date calendar and meeting agendas and minutes.

www.westchesterlegislators.com

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Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Summer 2015 Newsletter



Ken Jenkins

District 16 ~ Yonkers



Invest in Kids

I was a sponsor of the Invest In Kids Restoration Act which would have restored funding for all programs previously funded by Invest In Kids which were never added to the County Budget as required by another law I created to protect funding for at risk youth adopted in 2011.

There will be no difference in the straightforward Invest In Kids Restoration Act brought by Community Services Chairwoman Alfreda Williams that immediately restores funding for all the Invest in Kids programs dubiously dropped by the Astorino Administration. The legislation allows the Astorino Administration the ability to find the funds through savings or use emergency funds to finance the programs for at-risk youth.

While it was little surprise that that all Republicans voted against this Invest in Kids funding, I was shocked and disappointed that Yonkers Legislator Virginia Perez and BOL Chairman Kaplowitz voted against increased Invest in Kids funding.

Our kids deserve better and I will keep fighting for them. ■



Legislator Jenkins joined by children at Leake and Watts during Get Caught Reading Month

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

First the good news, the Playland management agreement is in place and Sprain Ridge Pool is finally moving forward. The bad news is the short sighted financial policies of the Astorino administration have damaged the “golden apple” and according Westchester County Budget Director Lawrence Soule there is a \$16 million budget deficit for 2015 and a \$52 million deficit projected for 2016. I did not vote for this irresponsible budget. Sadly, the other 3 Yonkers Legislators voted for the 2015 Astorino budget.

The County Executive’s 2015 Budget relies on an unprecedented amount of borrowing to pay the County’s bills – nearly \$25 Million in borrowing, Director Soule remarked that there is “no play” in the proposed budget, and that the Administration’s much-promised 0% increase in the tax levy is paid for with borrowed money.

In other words, the County is putting its bills on a credit card and accruing interest that will cause a property tax explosion. This is not good.

In November 2013, Moody’s downgraded Westchester County’s bond rating from Aaa to Aa1 precisely because of this type of fiscal recklessness. They referenced the county’s “structural imbalances and limited liquidity.” Now Moody’s is telling the Astorino administration that the proposed 2015 Budget is also “structurally imbalanced.”

Simply put, Rob Astorino is raising our taxes, even if we won’t feel the burden until a few short years go by. All of this borrowing will need to be paid for eventually. This practice doesn’t work in our own homes when paying bills and it’s not how we want the County’s budget to operate either.

Right now, the Board of Legislators is hard at work identifying places in the budget to reduce spending and ease the burden on the County’s taxpayers.

But difficult decisions need to be made now, not later. We’re already paying millions of dollars in interest on borrowed operational spending. That will end up costing us a lot more in the years ahead. We simply cannot afford to pay today’s bills with tomorrow’s money.

Sincerely,

Ken

Playland

Once we are all done celebrating the fact that Playland is set to receive the largest investment since it was built, it's important for County taxpayers to understand how we got to that point.

During his tenure in office, the County Executive has let the colonnades and north boardwalk crumble in addition to starving the park of basic funding needed for a simple paint job.

Over the years I've criticized the initial RFP process, sued the County Executive for circumventing county law when picking Sustainable Playland, spearheaded the due diligence that forced them to withdraw their proposal and I was appalled at the County Executive's \$100,000 report that added no value to the process of rejuvenating Playland and wasted taxpayer money.

Central Amusements, owners of Coney Island's Luna park, an RFP respondent and initial vendor selected to manage Playland under the Sustainable Playland Umbrella by the County Executive, clearly had a plan that was viable. During our open review process, the Astorino choice of Sustainable Playland did not have the financial wherewithal to help county taxpayers. It became clear there was no way we could have trusted them to make the investment in Playland that it deserves.

After proving his disregard for the cultural and historical value of Playland, the County Executive ignored the views clearly expressed by Rye residents in opposition to a massive field house and subse-



quent cannibalization of parking that would force park goers to overcrowd the surrounding streets. In the \$100,000 report compiled by one of his campaign donors, the County Executive demanded further study for recreational fields in the parking lot space. At Board of Legislators open meetings, local residents expressed significant opposition to the inclusion of any fields at Playland.

When pressed for the details of the \$100,000 report, the County Executive announced a new proposal involving Standard Amusements that was less financially beneficial for county taxpayers than the one proposed by the same vendor in response to the initial RFP.

This began the second review of a Playland related asset management agreement undertaken by the Board of Legislators and as the review progressed the logic for voting in favor of the deal with Standard Amusements became very clear. My Democratic colleagues on the Board of Legislators did outstanding work making this deal a better one for the taxpayers of Westchester.

Without our input, there would

be no guarantee that the County will invest properly in the infrastructure improvements that would complement Standard's efforts. Now, we've secured the largest investment in the Park since the day it was built that will go towards everything from rides, vendors and shops to the colonnades, north boardwalk and better lighting on Playland Parkway.

People who have been making the park run smoothly and efficiently were protected to ensure that there is a smooth transition to the new operator.

I'm thrilled that we were able to achieve these results within an arbitrary 60 day timetable. I'm certain that if the Board had the same time provided to them for a review as Standard has been given for the upcoming co-management period, we'd be able to make this an even bigger win for the taxpayers by being able to anticipate their needs and find solutions for the next season instead of waiting another year. Playland park-goers and Westchester taxpayers alike should know that through all of the slick announcements, speeches and press conferences declaring that he is their champion, the County Executive was willing to settle for less at Playland. We wouldn't and that's why I voted in favor of this deal.

Playland is a park that belongs to all the people of Westchester. Working together to infuse the park with needed capital we can restore this beautiful, iconic place to its historic glory and successful future. ■



Jenkins is joined by Yonkers Councilmen Christopher Johnson and Michael Sabatino and Bol. Majority Leader Catherine Borgia at a press conference in opposition to the proposed co-location of Yonkers Family Court and Dept. of Social Services

Jenkins Opposes Proposal to Co-locate the Department of Social Services and Family Court

Single entrance, lack of public transportation and public parking are huge issues

I publicly announced my longstanding opposition to the Astorino Administration's proposal to co-locate the Department of Social Services and Family Court at 131 Warburton Avenue, Yonkers.

family court facility 53 South Broadway is in desperate need of renovation based on a report commissioned in 2009 and sent to the BOL in 2010.

Although Westchester County has active litigation against the landlord at 131 Warburton Avenue, the Astorino Administration has proposed extending the existing lease at 131 Warburton Ave. This landlord owes Westchester County several million

Family Court

These two important government functions that provide services from two different points of view should remain separate. Having a court located at place to apply for services sends a chilling message - don't apply.

The current

dollars for uncompleted work and penalties for failure to deliver services pursuant to contract.

The proposed court house is approximately 1/2 mile from the current location and is served by a single bus line where the the current facility is in the middle of the County bus transportation hub.

There must be a reason that one cannot find a place anywhere in New York State where a Court is located in the same building as Social Services. The Administration should not be experimenting with people's lives.

I have proposed procuring the current court property at 53 South Broadway; renovating 53 South Broadway pursuant to a plan that was approved the Office of Court Administration's capital project committee; and purchasing the Warburton Avenue parking garage to repay Yonkers \$2 million dollars owed by Westchester County and to resolve the current parking problem for the County. ■

Sprain Ridge Pool — Finally!

It is hard to believe that the Sprain Ridge Pool has been closed since 2011. Equally frustrating is that, in 2006 – foreseeing that there would be a need to overhaul the pool within the next several years – the Spano administration and the BOL had developed an aquatic plan that called for a one-year closure, expending \$500,000 on a new construction design. Although the Board voted unanimously to add \$8.8 million to the 2011 Capital Budget in order to begin the renovation, County Executive Astorino illegally and unilaterally discontinued the progress. He repeatedly insisted (incorrectly) that only minor repairs were needed. Shamefully since then, the pool has further deteriorated.

After years of promise, on April 26th, the County Executive submitted an \$8.8 million dollar plan to design and renovate the Sprain Ridge Pool. Through the Committee review process the BOL was able to ensure that the near completed design is used as a starting point for reconstruction of the main lap pool and renovation of the building.

The BOL will be voting on the Sprain Ridge where unanimous support is expected. ■

