



**Year-End Report from Chairman Benjamin Boykin II**

December 2018

## STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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2018 has been a year of unprecedented achievement for the Westchester County Board of Legislators, with more important legislation passed in a single year than at any other time in recent memory.

In January, when our new leadership and a new majority took charge, we had a mission. Our goal was to pass laws that embody our values; to protect and provide for all Westchester residents; and to stabilize the County's finances after years of short-sighted and irresponsible decision-making by the prior County Executive.

I'm proud to say that in our first year, we've been able to put our principles into practice.

In the first half of the year, we passed laws prohibiting gun shows on County-owned property; we launched an investigation into poor storm response by electrical utilities; we acted to protect the health and safety of our children by raising the age for the purchase of tobacco and vaping products to 21; we took action to combat gender and race-based wage gaps by removing questions about prior salary history from the hiring process; and we acted to keep everyone in our community safe, passing the Immigration Protection Act which removes any fear immigrants might have about reaching out to County authorities.

The Board was no less busy in the second half of 2018, passing numerous bills. For example, we continued our efforts to protect Westchester's working families, passing an Earned Sick Leave law, ensuring workers the opportunity to earn time off to get well or to care for an ailing family member, and passing measures to protect workers from unscrupulous employers who hire but don't pay.

We continued to focus on protecting our children -- banning professionals from conducting so-called "conversion therapy" on minors in Westchester -- this cruel practice, which seeks to coerce young people into changing their sexual orientation, is no therapy at all.

Our inquiry into poor response to storm-related outages by electrical utilities continued, and we're proud that both Con Ed and New York State Electric and Gas have agreed to take specific steps to improve performance after utility representatives faced grilling in multiple public meetings with legislators. Rest assured, we will stay focused to make sure that changes are made.

We stepped in to help local municipalities -- like taking over the long-languishing renovation of Memorial Field in Mount Vernon, or helping fund a flood mitigation project in Rye Brook, or freeing up money for drinking water protections in the East of Hudson watershed in the northern part of the county.

I'm proud to say that this year, the Board has approved hundreds of units of new affordable housing, many for our seniors, in New Rochelle, Greenburgh, White Plains, Port Chester and elsewhere -- to help Westchester County remain affordable and livable.

After years of neglect, we're investing again in our critical infrastructure. That means we're rebuilding parkway ramps, repaving streets, rebuilding bridges, repairing our buildings, improving wastewater treatment plants, replacing our aging bus fleet with new energy efficient vehicles and updating information technology and other systems at Westchester Community College. Improving our infrastructure not only is important to the quality of life of County residents, but it helps make Westchester more attractive to businesses.

We're also improving our award-winning County parks system. We finally approved restoration work for the Miller House, a 300-year-old house that was used by George Washington during the Battle of White Plains. We're also undertaking improvements to the North and South County Trailways. This year we also approved repairs to the former Wightman mansion on the grounds of the Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers, and we're beginning long needed drainage work at Maple Moor Golf Course, among other parks projects.

Most importantly, working in a fresh spirit of co-operation with our new County Executive, George Latimer, we have begun the work of improving the County's finances. The passage of the \$1.94 billion operating budget begins the process of stabilizing the County's finances and rebuilding the County's fund balance, while continuing to provide essential services.

After two years of deficits that resulted in the County drawing down our rainy day funds by more than \$70 million, the 2019 operating budget does not use any fund balance.

In the budget, the Board was able to provide additional funding for nonprofits, whose work saves the County money by providing services that keep people working, keep people in their homes and train the next generation of business leaders. We were also able to restore funding for daycare slots that help parents keep working and give youngsters access to important early childhood development programs.

The budget ensures that the County will continue to provide crucial funding for public safety, health and mental health, consumer protection, parks, seniors and youth.

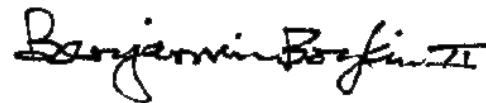
I am happy to report the County has contracts with all its unions for the first time in seven years, giving us a greater ability to plan for our financial future. In the new budget, the County headcount remains essentially flat.

In order to stabilize our finances, the County must increase its recurring revenue. The 2019 budget includes a 2% property tax increase. We will continue to work to minimize the impact on taxpayers.

And in 2019, we will continue to work with the County Executive to seek new revenue sources from the state legislature and the governor as we build a bridge to a better financial future for Westchester County.

What follows is a look at some of the legislative action this Board has taken in the second half of 2018 to make Westchester a better place for all residents to live in, work in and enjoy, now and for the future. Also included is a recap of major actions from the whole year, but, for more detail about the Board's work during the first half of 2018, please visit the Board's website, [www.westchesterlegislators.com](http://www.westchesterlegislators.com) to see my **Mid-Year Report**.

As Chair, I want to thank all Legislators and staff for their diligent and dedicated work during this historic year. I am honored to serve as Chair and I look forward to a productive 2019.



**Benjamin Boykin II**

*Chairman of the Board*

**There are many things that County government is responsible for that make Westchester cleaner, safer and healthier which residents are often surprised to find out about, which we invite you to explore:**

- **[How Much Is Your Health Worth?](http://westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/how_much_is_your_health_worth.pdf)**  
[westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/how\_much\_is\_your\_health\_worth.pdf]
- **[Keeping Our Environment Safe and Clean](http://westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/keeping_our_environment_safe_and_clean.pdf)**  
[westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/keeping\_our\_environment\_safe\_and\_clean.pdf]
- **[How We Keep Communities Safe](http://westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/how_we_keep_communities_safe.pdf)**  
[westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/how\_we\_keep\_communities\_safe.pdf]
- **[Keeping Consumers Safe from Rip-Offs](http://westchesterlegislators.com/images/PDF/keeping_consumers_safe_from_rip-offs.pdf)**  
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## **FUNDING APPROVED FOR MEMORIAL FOR SLAIN MOUNT VERNON POLICE OFFICER (July 16)**

- Unanimously approved \$150,000 for the design and construction of a permanent memorial to Christopher Ridley, the off-duty Mount Vernon police officer who was shot and killed in January 2008 by County police as Ridley was intervening to stop an altercation in front of the county's Department of Social Services at 85 Court Street in White Plains

## **PUBLIC WORKS APPROVED**

These are just some of the important infrastructure projects approved by the Board in the second half of 2018:

- Repair of Washington Street in Peekskill
- Replacement of Mamaroneck Avenue Bridge over Mamaroneck River
- Replacement of leaky steam system at Valhalla Campus
- Expansion of Saw Mill Sewer District to 800 parcels in New Castle
- Flood mitigation around Avon Circle in Rye Brook and the athletic fields at the Port Chester Middle School
- Release of East of Hudson Water Quality Investment Program funds to help towns and villages in northern Westchester with projects to protect our drinking water

## **EXPANDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- Approved more than 300 new units of affordable housing, including 150 units for seniors in 2018
- New developments approved in second half:
  - 14 LeCount Place in New Rochelle -- 76 units of affordable housing for people making around half the County's median income as part of a 27-story, 379-unit development
  - Mayfair in Greenburgh – 74 units of affordable rental housing for seniors located at the Knollwood Road entrance to the Westchester Community College campus.
  - 25 South Regent Street in Port Chester – 34 affordable rental apartments for seniors with around half the County's median income
  - Halstead Avenue in Harrison – seven affordable units for people making 60 percent of the County's median income
  - Brookfield Commons Phase 2 in White Plains -- replaces vacant building at 135 Lexington Avenue with nine story building with 129 units of affordable housing



## MAJOR PARKS IMPROVEMENTS APPROVED

- Reconstruction and repair work to the North County Trailway, including safety work on bridge over Croton Reservoir in Yorktown
- Study and design for future improvements to the South County Trailway from Elmsford to Yonkers
- Renovation of playgrounds at Willson's Woods Park in Mount Vernon
- Restoration of Miller House, believed to have been a command center for George Washington during the Battle of White Plains – with funds from a New York State grant for a classroom/visitors center, and additional County funding approved, the long-languishing project will finally move forward
- Repair of the former Wightman Mansion on the Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers



## ENSURING EARNED SICK LEAVE FOR WORKERS (OCT. 1)

- 12-5 vote
- Ensures that workers in Westchester County are able to earn up to 40 hours of time off for illnesses or for the care of a sick family member without fear of job consequences
- For companies with 5 or more employees, earned sick time will be paid; for companies with fewer employees, sick time will be earned
- Before the law, roughly 36% of workers in Westchester lacked paid sick time



## BANNING CONVERSION THERAPY FOR MINORS (OCT. 1)

- Unanimous vote
- Prohibits healthcare professionals from providing “conversion therapy” to minors in Westchester
- Such “therapy,” intended to change someone’s sexual orientation, has been discredited and denounced by nearly all the leading health agencies including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the World Health Organization



## **PYROTECHNIC CHILDREN'S SAFETY ACT (OCT. 1)**

- Unanimous vote
- Prohibits the sale or use in Westchester of sparklers and other ground-based or hand-held devices that produce a shower of white, gold, or colored sparks as their primary pyrotechnic effect

## **APPROVING NEW CONTRACTS, GIVING ALL COUNTY UNIONS CONTRACTS FOR FIRST TIME IN SEVEN YEARS (OCT. 15)**

- By a unanimous vote on Oct. 15, the Board approved a new contract for the County's largest union, the Civil Service Employees Association, or CSEA which had been working without a contract for seven years
- Also approved contracts with unions representing public health nurses and District Attorney office investigators

## **ONGOING PROGRAM TO HONOR MILITARY VETERANS NOW SERVING AS FIREFIGHTERS, POLICE OFFICERS, EMS WORKERS (OCT. 29)**

- Passed unanimously
- Creation and distribution of special pins for the uniforms of firefighters, police officers and emergency medical service workers who are veterans of our nation's armed forces, marking their service



## **HOME IMPROVEMENT LICENSING LAW CHANGED TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM "WAGE THEFT" (NOV. 19)**

- Passed unanimously
- Explicitly requires the county to consider judgements against contractors for non-payment or under-payment of employees when examining new license applications and license renewals to combat "wage theft"
- Requires more written disclosure for consumers in home improvement contracts
- Modest increase in licensing fees will pay for increased consumer protection enforcement

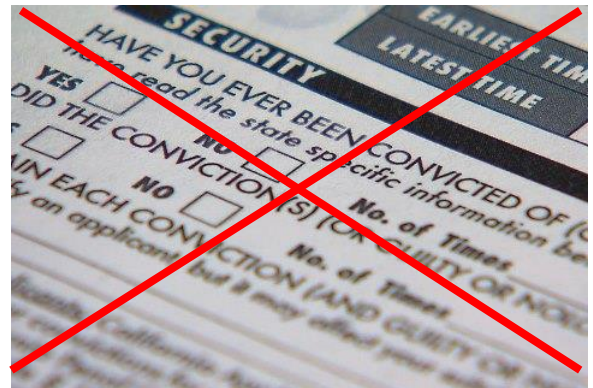


### CO-OP DISCLOSURE LAW PASSED (NOV. 19)

- Passed by a bi-partisan vote of 13 to 4
- New rules are designed to make the process faster for buyers and sellers:
  - Boards have 15 days to deem an application complete
  - Boards have 60 days from completion to either accept or reject applications
- New rules designed to combat discrimination:
  - Boards must send notice of rejections to County Human Rights Commission which will act if a pattern of discrimination is revealed

### FAIR CHANCE TO WORK ACT PASSED (DEC. 3)

- Passed 11-5
- Eliminates questions about a job applicant's criminal record on initial job applications
- Allows criminal background questions in interviews and background checks
- Designed to give qualified applicants a chance to explain their situations in interviews
- Employment is one of the most important factors in reducing recidivism rates
- School districts, employers of police officers, and other employers barred by law from hiring applicants with specific criminal convictions, are not subject to new law



### TAKING CONTROL OF MEMORIAL FIELD RESTORATION (DEC. 3)

- Unanimous vote
- County will assume responsibility for final design and construction of the renovation, which has languished for a decade
- Once work is completed, control of the park will be turned over to Mount Vernon

### APPROVING KEY APPOINTEES

- In 2018, the Board approved and/or confirmed the appointments or re-appointments of more than 165 individuals to the County's departments, boards and commissions

## KEY 2018 FULL-YEAR LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Banning Gun Shows on County-Owned Property (Feb. 5)
- Immigration Protection Act (March 12)
- Probe of Poor Storm Preparation and Response by Con Ed, NYSEG (public meetings with utilities on March 19, June 4, & Oct. 2)
- Resolution Supporting State Bill to Create Extreme Risk Protection Orders (March 26)
- Combating Gender and Race-Based Wage Gaps by Banning Salary History Questions in Hiring (April 9)
- Law to Encourage Hiring of Disabled-Veteran-Owned Businesses in County Contracting (April 23)
- Resolution Opposing Citizenship Question on 2020 Census Short Form (May 7)
- Raising Age for Sale of Tobacco and Vaping Products to 21 (June 4)
- Banning the Use of County Executive's Name or Likeness on County Promotional Signs (June 18)
- Ensuring Public Safety Chaplain Accountability and Transparency (June 18)
- Funding Memorial for Slain Mount Vernon Police Officer (July 16)
- Ensuring Earned Sick Leave for Workers (Oct. 1)
- Banning Conversion Therapy for Minors (Oct. 1)
- Pyrotechnic Children's Safety Act (Oct. 1)
- Approving Contracts for CSEA, Public Health Nurses and DA Investigators, Giving all County Unions Contracts for the First Time in Seven Years (Oct. 15)
- Ongoing Program to Honor Military Veterans Now Serving as Firefighters, Police Officers, EMS Workers (Oct. 29)
- Home Improvement Licensing Law Changed to Protect Workers from "Wage Theft" (Nov. 19)
- Co-op Disclosure Law Passed (Nov. 19)
- Taking Control of Memorial Field Restoration (Dec. 3)
- Fair Chance to Work Act Passed (Dec. 3)
- More than 300 New Units of Affordable Housing Approved:
  - Mount Hope Plaza site on Lake Street in White Plains – 56-unit development offering affordable housing for seniors
  - 14 LeCount Place in New Rochelle – 76 units of affordable housing for people making around half the County's median income as part of a 27-story, 379-unit development
  - Mayfair in Greenburgh – 74 units of affordable rental housing for seniors located at the Knollwood Road entrance to the Westchester Community College campus.
  - 25 South Regent Street in Port Chester – 34 affordable rental apartments for seniors making around half the County's median income
  - Halstead Avenue in Harrison – seven affordable units for people making 60 percent of the County's median income
  - Brookfield Commons Phase 2 in White Plains – replaces vacant building at 135 Lexington Avenue with nine story building with 129 units of affordable housing
- Major Public Works Approved:
  - Rehabilitation of Bronx River Parkway/Cross County Parkway ramps
  - Rehabilitation of Columbus Avenue in Mt. Pleasant



- Replacing and repairing equipment at wastewater treatment facilities in Yonkers and Mamaroneck
- Purchase of new energy efficient vehicles, including nearly 80 new Bee-Line buses which will have almost double the fuel efficiency of previous buses
- Completion of the design and construction of pathway from Rye Metro North Station to Playland
- Updating technology infrastructure and physical plant repairs at Westchester Community College
- Repair of Washington Street in Peekskill
- Replacement of Mamaroneck Avenue Bridge over Mamaroneck River
- Expanding Saw Mill Sewer District to 800 parcels in New Castle
- Flood mitigation around Avon Circle in Rye Brook and the athletic fields at the Port Chester Middle School
- Parks Improvements Approved:
  - Repair of Glen Island Sea Wall
  - Renovation of Maple Moor Golf Course
  - Restoration of Miller House
  - Reconstruction and repair of North County Trailway
  - Study and design of reconstruction and repair of South County Trailway
  - Renovation of playgrounds at Willson's Woods Park in Mount Vernon
  - Repair of former Wightman mansion at Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers
- Approved More than 165 Key Appointees to Departments, Advisory Boards and Commissions