



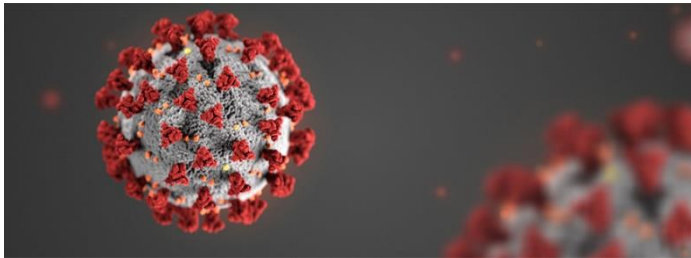
Year-End Report from Chairman Benjamin Boykin II

December 2020

2020 has been a year like no other in living memory.

Across Westchester and the world, the COVID-19 pandemic turned 2020 into a year of loss and disruption. But it has also been a year of determination and resilience. We have all reached deep within ourselves for fortitude and resolve to carry on, to adapt, to provide for one another.

The lives of more than 1,500 Westchester residents were cut short by the pandemic. They will live in our memories, and their memory will continue to inform our actions. The safety of the people of Westchester will continue to be at the center of our thinking as it has been since the initial COVID-19 outbreak in New Rochelle in March.



Working with Federal, State and local officials, and with the leadership of County Executive George Latimer, Westchester was able to rapidly institute coronavirus testing, expand hospital capacity, make changes to our mass transit, provide personal protective equipment to medical personnel and municipal governments; and enforce health and safety measures such as requiring masks and social distancing, in order to mitigate the scope of this disaster.

These measures could not have been implemented without the tireless efforts of our County Health Department, under the leadership of Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler. The efforts of staff in our Health Department, in our Department of Community Mental Health, in our Department of Social Services, in our Parks Department, and across all of County government, have been heroic. When crisis strikes, people turn to government for help and for solutions. All the entities of this government have worked together for a singular purpose – to protect and support the people of Westchester County.

We have also taken legislative action to respond to the crisis, including passing a measure in the second half of 2020 that limits the fees that third-party food delivery services can charge local restaurants during a declared emergency. The measure, similar to one also adopted in New York City, helps give our local restaurants a fighting chance to compete during the winter when outdoor dining is less feasible, and protects consumers who might be struggling to pay fees that can add significantly to the price of take-out meals.



I'm proud to say that during the COVID-19 crisis, the Board of Legislators has not missed a single meeting. The investments we've made in information technology have allowed us to continue to conduct the people's business, provide access to essential services, continually disseminate critical information, pass legislation to benefit our residents, and provide relief to property taxpayers and help for consumers and small businesses.

Despite the financial challenges of the pandemic, and thanks to help from the Federal government, we have been able to unanimously pass operating, capital and special districts budgets for 2021 that are balanced, reduce the property tax levy, support the social safety net and maintain essential services at a time when they are needed most.

With vaccines beginning to rollout, better days are in front of us. The choices we make in the days ahead, as we confront the health, social and economic fallout of the pandemic, will impact our future wellbeing for a generation.

Relief related to small businesses recovery, housing affordability, food and housing insecurity, government ethics reform, police reform, legislative redistricting, investing in our physical and technology infrastructure -- these are just some of the issues on the agenda for the Board of Legislators in 2021.

SECOND-HALF HIGHLIGHTS

2021 BUDGETS



1,302.80	1,240.64	1,235.42	939.09	1,306.67	843.29
0.00	498.18	0.00	0.00	402.03	0.00
15.80	76.42	38.38	15.42	254.87	25.46
0.00	1,485.22	6,062.23	447.24	16,048.05	349.55
672.82	504.91	1,094.97	5,620.31	2,560.60	
0.00	310.01	3,142.38	9,729.24	14,693.06	
0.00	670.64	1,259.50	4,294.85	7,427.24	
31.58	39,386.87	17,848.02	34,434.47	0.00	
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
0.00	19,577.90	11,799.74	14,874.16	33,030.23	
0.00	1,335.55	21.76	865.15	348.50	
0.00	0.00	0.00	12,032.74	24,740.68	
0.00	0.00	0.00	4,387.73	18,444.80	
0.00	0.00	0.00	701.60	4,796.53	502.91
0.00	0.00	2,144.68	2,144.68	1,727.45	
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	82.02

The economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic confronted us with financial challenges that we could not have anticipated as 2020 began. But the work County Executive George Latimer and the Board did to stabilize the County’s finances in 2018 and 2019 puts us in a position to respond.

Much of the second half of 2020 was spent by the Board vetting, modifying and, finally approving operating, capital and special district budgets for 2021.

Federal aid to cover COVID-related expenses in 2020 allowed us to pass an operating budget for 2021 that reduces the County’s overall expenditures by nearly \$16 million, and lowers the County property tax levy for a second year in a row.

Just when people are turning to government for help, the 2021 budget preserves and expands our ability to provide for people who are hungry, or who may be facing domestic violence or eviction, to aid students who need educational support, and to strengthen support for childcare which helps parents get back into the workforce or hold on to jobs during the pandemic.

We’ve also added millions for business development to help the Westchester economy recover.

In addition, we approved a capital budget with more than \$260 million in new appropriations. Investing in our infrastructure is essential to building back from COVID-19, and it’s smart to do it now when interest rates are historically low. Plus, the County’s capital program supports more than 2,000 permanent jobs in Westchester.

The fact that the 2021 County operating, capital and special district budgets passed unanimously is a rare event – reflective of the creativity and leadership of the County Executive, our County Budget Department and my fellow Legislators working in unison during a time of crisis to protect the people of this County.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION UPGRADES

With borrowing costs at historic lows, now is a smart time to invest in capital projects, and the Board did just that in the second half of 2020.

The money we spend today to upgrade our roads and transportation, our waste management facilities, and our recycling operations, will pay off for a generation in an improved quality of life for residents, and in a cleaner, greener, more sustainable Westchester that is even more attractive to businesses.

The funds we allocated in the second half of 2020 to upgrade our infrastructure included improvements to the County’s largest wastewater treatment plant in Yonkers. This will modernize the facility, make it more energy efficient, and improve odor control.

We approved spending for new computer-assisted dispatch equipment for police, fire and EMS first-responders.



We passed financing for the purchase of up to 15 new, fuel-efficient ParaTransit shuttlebuses, which will allow us to provide more rides to seniors and the disabled while reducing our energy costs and carbon footprint.

We funded a study of the feasibility of consolidating the County’s sewer districts, which may be able to provide residents with lower operating costs in the future.

We approved rehabilitation projects for various County roads like Butlerville Road over the Croton River in Somers, and Westchester Avenue in Port Chester.

We also released hundreds of thousands of dollars, funded by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, for the upgrading and replacement of septic systems in the northern part of the County to protect our watershed.

These new initiatives, together with projects we approved in the first half of the year to expand food scrap recycling; replace more than 100 Bee-Line diesel buses with new, hybrid electric ones; fund more than \$25 million in County road improvements; and more, are part of our ongoing commitment to improving Westchester infrastructure for the future.

PARKS IMPROVEMENTS



The Westchester County Parks system is one of our greatest assets. Our parks provided invaluable relief this year to residents in need of recreation and open space during the COVID-19 pandemic. And our Parks Department staff did heroic work in keeping our parks open and safe for residents.

We continued our commitment to our parks in the second half of 2020.

Unfortunately, we were not able to open Playland during the 2020 season, but we took the opportunity to modernize this historic recreation asset by approving projects to rehabilitate the shoreline, pool, main tower, and Colonnades, as well as to sign off on other structural restorations and site improvements. Our investments of around \$100 million in Playland will ensure that this nearly century-old landmark will

continue to make memories for Westchester residents for generations to come.

At Croton Point Park, we approved construction of a new bathhouse for swimmers and offices for staff as well as picnic area renovations.

At Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers, which serves more than 80,000 visitors a year, we approved a plan to improve parking and drainage around footpaths.

At Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill, we approved improvements to pedestrian bridges and pathways as well as new electric, water and sanitary sewer services at various buildings.

At V.E. Macy Park in Greenburgh, we approved playground, picnic areas, soccer and baseball field improvements.

These come on top of plans approved in the first half of the year to complete the rebuilding of Memorial Field in Mount Vernon, make major improvements to the North and South County Trailways, rehabilitate buildings at Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers and Lasdon Park in Katonah; renovate Pat Henry Field in Mount Pleasant; repair infrastructure at Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center in Yorktown; and more.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INVESTMENTS

Providing access to affordable housing for County residents, and allowing seniors to be able to afford to remain in their communities are among the biggest challenges we face.

We worked in 2020 to address these issues by providing financial and infrastructure support to private developers undertaking new construction at several locations.

In 2020, we approved developments that will add more than 530 new units of affordable housing in Westchester.

In the second half of the year, we approved \$2.5 million to help fund the development of 70 one-bedroom affordable apartments for seniors 62 and older at 48 Manhattan Avenue in Greenburgh as well

as \$5 million for the acquisition of land and development of 109 affordable units at a new development at 62 Main Street in Tarrytown.



Rendering of 178 Warburton at The Ridgeway - SLCE Architects

These are in addition to the developments approved in the first half of 2020 -- 179 units of affordable housing at 116 Guion Place in New Rochelle, and 173 units at 178 Warburton Avenue & 160 Cottage Gardens in Yonkers.

The Board also signed off on a renegotiated lease for a contemplated mixed-use development on County property on Skyline Drive in Mount Pleasant. During our committee discussions, we insisted on modifications to ensure that if the developer decides to build housing on the site, at least 10% of the units will meet certain affordability guidelines. The Board intends to include these requirements in future developments of County-owned property.

ELECTION IMPROVEMENTS



The COVID-19 outbreak stressed our election system in unimaginable ways this year – with new procedures for mail-in voting being instituted by gubernatorial executive order, and with unprecedented challenges relating to the health and safety of voters and poll workers. Voters experienced many challenges in the June Primary. We knew we must take action to do

better in the General Election this past November – and we did, despite record voter turnout.

Although our elections are conducted by the Westchester County Board of Elections (BOE), the County Executive and the Board of Legislators made recommendations for short- and long-term improvements. Through a series of meetings with the public, the BOE, and outside voting advocacy groups, the Board’s Election Information Gathering Task Force was able to create and issue a report of recommendations to help the Board of Elections. These included expanded early voting hours; clearer written communications to voters; a multimedia campaign to encourage early voting; multi-lingual video instructions for how to vote by absentee ballot; changes in poll worker procedures to increase the number of available workers; expanded drop-off options for absentee ballots; an increase in necessary voting equipment; and information-sharing partnerships with voter advocacy organizations.

In addition, the Board of Legislators approved financing for the purchase of 280 new voting machines, as well as for the purchase of electronic poll books and ballot printers.

I’m proud to say that the general election was much improved, despite the challenges of COVID-19 and historic turnout levels. I’d like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the County Executive, our Legislators, the BOE staff, and all the poll workers and volunteers whose efforts made that happen.

POLICE REFORM

The subject of police reform will be front and center for us as we begin 2021.

2020 was a year that saw calls for police reform spread across the nation in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota. At that time, all the members of this Board joined to write to our legislative counterparts in Minneapolis calling for justice for Mr. Floyd. In June, many of us joined our New York State legislative colleagues in backing historic reforms on

police transparency, chokeholds, false, race-based 911 reports, and more.

Early in the new year, we will be receiving a plan from the County Executive's Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force – which includes police and community representatives as well as representatives from the Latimer Administration and several members of this body. The Task Force has been working for months, considering revisions to police training and developing a plan to reinvent and modernize police strategies and programs based on community input, in accordance with an Executive Order from Governor Cuomo.



Prior to sending it to the Governor, The Board will be taking a deep dive into its recommendations in committee meetings, as well as hearing from the public on the plan, and, if necessary, crafting new legislation to make sure our County police policies and procedures ensure equity and public safety, and take advantage of new technology.

NEW TECHNOLOGY & TRANSPARENCY

Over the past two years, we have invested in new information technology – including upgrades to our video conferencing capabilities, our website and our video streaming system. These forward-thinking investments allowed us to continue to do the people's business uninterrupted when the pandemic hit in 2020, including allowing us to provide the public full and transparent access to Board proceedings even though we have had to limit in-person access.

In 2021, we will be implementing a new system for managing our legislative documents. This new system will allow us to dramatically improve the ability of the public to access and search all legislative documents and records.

These investments are all part of the Board's ongoing commitment to transparency and to continually finding new and better ways to serve the people of Westchester.

NEW LGBTQ ADVISORY BOARD



The Board of Legislators is committed making sure every voice is heard and that our government and its actions reflect the full diversity of Westchester. Towards this effort we enshrined in law the establishment of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Advisory Board, to advise the County Executive, the Board and various County agencies and department on LGBTQ issues, including monitoring policies, procedures, practices and programs. By making the LGBTQ Advisory Board a matter of law, we ensure that it will continue to exist and advise the County in the future, regardless of who the County Executive may be.

The Board also approved 125 key appointments to other advisory boards, commissions and departments over the course of 2020.

CENSUS 2020

The census is required to count every person living in the United States, regardless of age or citizenship status, every 10 years. It is crucial because our count will determine how millions of federal dollars come back to our communities, and how many representatives we have in Congress for the next decade.

The census count ended in October with Westchester County's response rate up 1.4% over our response rate in 2010, despite the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic. That's better than New York State as a whole, which had a decreased response rate of 0.4%; and the nation, whose response rate was up 0.5%.

New census numbers mean the Board of Legislators will have a major, once-in-a-decade task before it in 2021 – legislative redistricting. I'd like to thank our County Department of Planning, as well as the County Executive and all our Legislators who worked hard in 2020 to get the word out about the census to make sure the residents of this County will continue to have their voices heard.



As I said at the beginning of this report, 2020 has been a year like no other in living memory. I am proud of the way the Latimer Administration and this Board have stepped up to meet these unprecedented challenges.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO TARA BERNARD

In addition to the many losses caused by COVID-19, we suffered a significant loss of one of our own this year. Tara Bernard, who served the people of Westchester for two decades, passed this November. At the Board she worked in numerous positions, most recently as Special Advisor to the Chair. Tara also received the "Unsung Hero" award from Riverkeeper for her advocacy and work protecting the environment, in particular the closing of the Indian Point nuclear power plant. At 53, Tara is gone too soon. But her loyalty and her dedication to the betterment of Westchester County will always be a model to live up to for those who knew her.

GIVING THANKS AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

I would especially like to express my profound gratitude to my fellow Legislators and to our Board staff. Our ability to continue to do the work of the people throughout this pandemic is entirely because of their ingenuity, dedication, flexibility, and creativity.

On a final note, 2020 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Board of Legislators, an event we had planned to commemorate and celebrate this past October. But just as we have missed many milestones in our personal lives due to the pandemic, this golden milestone could not be celebrated in the way we envisioned. We look forward to a time of safety and health in the near future when we can once again be together to enjoy life's special moments.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Benjamin Boykin II'.

Benjamin Boykin II
Chairman of the Board

2021 BUDGETS

Unanimously Passed 2021 Operating, Capital & Special District Budgets That:

- Cut Overall Spending By \$15.7 Million
- Lower County Property Tax Levy By \$1 Million
- Preserve Essential Services
- Expand Support For Nonprofit Partners
- Expand Childcare Support
- Add \$5 Million For Economic Development
- Add \$2 Million For Food Insecurity
- Add \$5 Million For Housing Assistance
- Invest Over \$260 Million More In Improvements To Infrastructure, Transportation And Parks, Including \$112 Million In Environmental Improvements

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

- Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Plant Modernization And Odor Control
- New Equipment For Computer-Assisted Dispatch For First Responders – Police, Fire & EMS
- Financing Approved For Up To 15 New, Fuel-Efficient Paratransit Shuttlebuses
- Sewer System Consolidation Feasibility Study
- Road Repairs
 - Butlerville Road. Over The Croton River In Somers (Project Had Been Held Up By Former County Executive In 2013)
 - Westchester Avenue In Port Chester

PARKS IMPROVEMENTS

- Rye Playland
 - Rehabilitation Of Shoreline, Pool, Tower, Colonnades, And Other Structural Restorations And Site Improvements
- Croton Point Park
 - Construction Of New Structure To Accommodate Bathhouse For Swimmers And Offices For Staff
 - Picnic Area Renovations
- Tibbetts Brook Park
 - Approved Renovations To Pathways, Entrance, Parking Lots And Drainage
- Blue Mountain Reservation
 - Construction Of New Electric, Water And Sanitary Sewer Services In Various Buildings
 - Improvements To Pedestrian Bridges, Pathways And Landscaping
- V.E. Macy Park
 - Renovations To Recreational Facilities Such As Playground, Picnic Areas, And Soccer And Baseball Fields

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INVESTMENTS

- Total Of **531** New Units For The Year, With The Following For The Second Half Of 2020
 - 70 Units At 48 Manhattan Avenue In Greenburgh
 - Purchase Of Property To Create 109 Units At 62 Main Street In Tarrytown

ELECTION SUPPORT

- Established The Election Information Gathering Task Force, Which Collected And Submitted Recommendations For Efficiency Improvements To The Board Of Elections For The November General Election
- Approved \$4.5 Million To Purchase 280 New Voting Machines And E-Poll Books For The November Election

POLICE REFORM

- Supported NYS Police Reform Legislation
- Legislators Appointed To County Executive's Police Reform And Reinvention Task Force
- Board To Adopt Reinvention Plan In 2021

PROTECTING OUR RESIDENTS

- Cap On Third Party Food Delivery Service Fees
- Convened Meeting With Utilities And Internet Service Providers To Examine Inadequate Response To Tropical Storm Isaias, Which Left Thousands Without Electricity, Heat And Phone Service

ADVISORY BOARDS

- Established LGBTQ Advisory Board Under County Law

KEY 2020 FULL-YEAR LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Unanimously passed resolution supporting NYS elimination of the "Pink Tax," in which similar goods and services are routinely priced higher when they are marketed to women
- Passed legislation to protect wild and exotic animal by prohibiting their appearance at circuses and similar shows
- Launched a reconstituted Minority Affairs Task Force
- Supported State legislation to create Nuclear Generating Station Decommissioning Oversight Board; asked Nuclear Regulatory Commission to open hearing regarding planned transfer of Indian Point power plant to decommissioning company

- Approved 125 Key Appointees to Departments, Advisory Boards and Commissions
- Approved 531 New Units of Affordable Housing
 - **179 Units** at 116 Guion Place in New Rochelle
 - **173 Units** (plus Community Rooms, Indoor and Outdoor Recreational Spaces, Fitness Center, Park, and Head Start Center) at 178 Warburton Avenue & 160 Cottage Gardens in Yonkers
 - **70 Units** at 48 Manhattan Avenue in Greenburgh
 - **109 Units** at 62 Main Street in Tarrytown
- COVID-19 Pandemic Response
 - Worked with elected officials at all government levels to implement the appropriate safeguards: coronavirus testing, expansion of hospital capacity, changes to mass transit, access to personal protective equipment for first responders, and enforcement of mask wearing and social distancing
 - Conducted business in compliance with the State's Open Meetings Law and Executive Orders from the Governor utilizing the Board's new internet and videoconferencing technology
 - Provided important information and resources to the public through daily E-News
 - Enacted property tax relief measures by extending deadlines for taxpayers facing COVID-19 related hardship and slashing late payment penalties for all property taxpayers
 - Enacted critical budgetary measures including reallocating \$10 million earmarked for the County's reserve fund, and reducing spending by \$11 million by bonding for certiorari repayments and annual pension contribution costs
 - Approved a Voluntary Separation Program available to most County and Board employees as another cost savings opportunity
- Police Reform
 - Sent letter signed by all members of the Board of Legislators to Minneapolis officials urging justice after the murder of George Floyd
 - Supported State police reform legislation
- Election Support
 - Established Election Information Gathering Task Force, which collected and submitted recommendations for efficiency improvements to the Board of Elections for the November general election
 - Held public hearing on July 8 to receive commentary from constituents about the June 23rd primary
 - Convened Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting to hear from Board of Elections Commissioners
- Public Works & Transportation Improvements
 - Wastewater treatment improvements in Blind Brook, Mamaroneck, Peekskill, Port Chester, and Yonkers
 - Sewer and septic system modifications in Harrison, Ossining, Bedford, Briarcliff Manor; release of East of Hudson money for septic repair and replacement in Northern Westchester watershed areas
 - Pump station repairs in New Rochelle and Yonkers
 - Rehabilitation of Yorktown Maintenance Facility and improvements to Central Maintenance Facility in Yonkers

- Road Repairs from North Salem to Yonkers
- Approved study of potential sewer district consolidation
- Environmental Improvements
 - Replacement of 108 Orion V 40-Foot diesel buses with hybrid models
 - Purchase of two all-electric buses and construction of electric bus charging station
 - Installation of additional electric vehicle charging stations in County-owned parking lots and garages
 - Rehabilitation of the Material Recovery Facility & Transfer Station in Valhalla to include the design and construction of a food scrap composting and education center
 - Resolution to create a formal plan to reduce County's greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint
 - Expansion of County food scrap recycling facilities and partnership with local municipalities
- Parks Upgrades
 - Reconstruction of Memorial Field in Mount Vernon
 - \$5 million for North & South County Trailways
 - Kensico Dam Plaza and Mountain Lakes Park Dam projects
 - Hilltop Hanover Farm & Environmental Center infrastructure repairs
 - Rehabilitation of buildings at Lasdon Park and Lenoir Preserve
 - Repairs to Pat Henry Field in Mount Pleasant
 - Rehabilitation of Playland shoreline, pool, main tower, and Colonnades
 - Improved parking and drainage at Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers
 - New bath house, offices, picnic areas at Croton Point Park
 - Improved pathways, bridges and systems at Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill
 - Improved playground, picnic areas, and ball fields at V.E. Macy Park in Greenburgh