



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 140 miles of road and numerous bridges, the County airport, the Bee-Line 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)
- pre-school 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.

NOTE: Photos without masks were taken before the pandemic, or where social distancing was not an issue.

Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS

Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Winter 2021/2022 Newsletter



MaryJane Shimsky

District 12 ~ Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Edgemont, Greenburgh,
 Hartsdale, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington
 Majority Leader & Co-Chair, Rules



We Are All Safer If Everyone Is Vaccinated!

- Individuals ages 5 and up are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine (children 5-11 currently may receive the Pfizer vaccine only).
- Teens 16-17 can get a Pfizer booster six months after their primary vaccination sequence.
- Adults 18 and up can get a booster with any of the approved vaccines six months after their primary Pfizer or Moderna sequence, or two months after their primary Johnson & Johnson shot.
- To schedule your vaccine or booster, visit vaccines.gov or the County Department of Health at health.westchestergov.com.
- For further assistance, call my office at 914-995-2095 and we'll be happy to help.

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The year 2021 has been perhaps the busiest in the 50+ year history of the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

As the pandemic persists into a third winter, the County continues to prioritize public health and promote vaccinations for COVID (as well as the flu). With federal approval of the vaccine for individuals 5 and older, and booster shots for those 16 and up we are urging everyone to do the right thing for themselves and their communities, and get fully vaccinated. You can find the most up-to-date information and book appointments on the Department of Health website at health.westchester.gov or at the CDC's vaccines.gov.

In addition, we continue to confront those issues made worse by COVID—helping our unemployed neighbors regain financial stability, meeting mental health needs, addressing quality of life and safety concerns, and providing recreational and cultural enrichment opportunities.

This was also a year when the County largely resumed its normal activities. The Board of Legislators approved the bonding of nearly \$306 million in capital projects. Recently passed legislation includes improvements to the County's coop disclosure law, penalties for discriminatory harassment, revisions to the County's ethics law, and requirements for County vehicles to be electric, hybrid, or powered by other alternative fuels.

Despite COVID, County government is in the best financial shape in nearly a generation. Westchester County has received \$189 million in federal aid in 2021. This is a lot of money, though not as much as it may appear, given the ongoing need to repair and upgrade capital assets, invest in public and mental health, and ensure that the parts of County government hollowed out in the early and mid-2010s can function properly in coming years—all for a population of more than one million people, as of the 2020 Census. This is no time to be spendthrifts, but it is time to make the right investments for our future.

Our work is as challenging as ever, and I look forward to continuing it on your behalf. As always, please contact me with your questions, suggestions, and concerns.

Sincerely,



Taking a break from COVID
at one of our beautiful County parks

Get the latest County and district information by subscribing to my E-News at westchesterlegislators.com/district-12

Protecting Our Environment

The devastating impact of Hurricane Ida was a painful harbinger of the dire consequences of climate change. We must continue to harden our infrastructure, reduce our carbon footprint, and limit the waste we produce.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESOLUTION: In October, the Board unanimously passed a Declaration of Climate Emergency resolution for Westchester County, to ensure that Westchester continues to focus on the environmental impact of our decisions.

HYBRID AND ELECTRIC BUS REPLACEMENT ACCELERATION: We've accelerated the program to replace the County's fleet of 30-foot diesel buses, to make the entire fleet hybrid-electric or all-electric by the end of 2023. As of mid-2021, the County's bus fleet was 54% hybrid-electric or all-electric.

NEW HYBRID AND ELECTRIC POLICY FOR COUNTY VEHICLES: Whenever possible, all future County vehicle purchases will be electric, plug-in hybrid, or powered by other alternative fuels. The program is expected to reduce carbon emissions, as well as save County taxpayers millions per year.

STRENGTHENING COMPLETE STREETS POLICY: All projects relating to County roads must now comply with a Complete Streets checklist of features that promote safe use of roads by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation.

PARKWAY NOISE MONITORING: To combat noise pollution for residents living near our County parkways, we approved a study on the use of automatic noise detectors to help the County identify—and ultimately ticket—drivers who violate legal noise limits.

WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATIONS IN PARKS: To help limit waste, we approved a plan to replace drinking fountains in County parks with water bottle refill stations. Single-use plastic bottles are one of the most common items that pollute our waterways. ■

Parks Roundup

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME FOR WESTCHESTER COUNTY PARKS. WITH ATTENDANCE UP, THE BOARD OF LEGISLATORS HAS ADVANCED A SERIES OF PROJECTS TO UPDATE OUR PARKS FACILITIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL OUR RESIDENTS.

TARRYTOWN LIGHTHOUSE: The BOL approved a \$3.3 million restoration of this iconic landmark, built in 1883 and designated on the National Register of Historic Places. After completion, the lighthouse will be opened once again to visitors!

BRONX RIVER RESERVATION TRAILWAY: With the long-anticipated opening in July of a 1.5-mile connection between Crane Road (Scarsdale) and Greenacres Road (Hartsdale), pedestrians and cyclists now enjoy a contiguous greenway from Bronxville to the Kensico Dam.

V.E. MACY PARK: The BOL approved a plan for essential improvements to the watercourse, playground, and picnic areas at Ardsley's V.E. Macy Park.

HILLSIDE WOODS: The BOL provided \$100,000 in funding to help Hastings-on-Hudson restore the 52-acre Hillside Woods, including removal of invasive species, planting of native trees and shrubs, and installation of deer fencing.

SOUTH COUNTY TRAILWAY: The County has begun much-needed repaving of the 14.1-mile South County Trailway, from the Yonkers border to Elmsford. Completion is expected in early 2022.



Groundbreaking, South County Trail in Ardsley

A NEW PARK AT CHAUNCEY SQUARE: The BOL has agreed to allow the New York State Department of Transportation to turn over 14.8 acres of surplus wooded property to Dobbs Ferry for use as parkland. With mulched trails and benches, the new park will be used for passive recreation, and will also help with stormwater management in the Lawrence Street area.

LENOIR PRESERVE: A \$5 million County project is underway to preserve Lenoir's Wightman Mansion — a 13,000-square-foot gem in our parks system — with re-opening expected in August 2022. ■

Helping Local Governments Deal with Flooding

If in 2021 we still needed a wakeup call about worsening storms in the face of climate change, Hurricane Ida provided it. The dramatic rescues of Westchester residents stranded in their cars, or trapped in their homes as flood waters rushed in, looked like those from major storms in Florida or Louisiana.

As we deal with yet another “new normal” of worsening storms and flooding, Westchester County stands ready to help our local governments. Many towns, villages and cities are showing renewed interest in the County's stormwater

management program, which provides matching funds for their stormwater management projects. We expect a wave of new applications in the coming months.

These local projects will help with most storms, but major flooding events

are putting our homes and businesses at greater risk than ever. I look forward to working with all levels of government, and with professionals in the field, to devise plans for coping with the new challenges to come. ■

National Infrastructure Bank

In my years as your County Legislator, I have sounded the alarm on the need to fix our crumbling infrastructure. Westchester County has made great strides in recent years to catch up with its capital project backlog.

Here and across the country, however, there is so much more to be done: repairing roads and bridges; replacing leaky sewers and lead water pipes; insuring universal broadband access; improving storm resiliency, flood control, and stormwater management; planning the low-carbon transit options of the future; producing more renewable energy; fixing utility lines; repairing schools; and building more affordable housing. The need is vast, and so is the cost—comprehensive national estimates start at over \$5 trillion!

Government appropriations will not be enough to solve our infrastructure crisis. That is why I have begun working with the Coalition for the National Infrastructure Bank, an organization dedicated to creating the fifth national infrastructure bank in our country's history. This fall, the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) passed a resolution supporting HR 3339, the enabling legislation in the House of Representatives. Congressman Mondaire Jones, representing part of Westchester and all of Rockland County, has joined the legislation as a co-sponsor.

For more information, go to nibcoalition.com. ■

PHOTO GALLERY



Honoring Susan Seal for her work on restoring Hartsdale's Odell House



At the Eagle Scout Ceremony for Irvington Troop 55, with Walter Fried



Celebrating Juneteenth with Congressman Mondaire Jones, Hartsdale



At the Peace Garden dedication to honor women veterans, Greenburgh Public Library



Unveiling the Progress Pride Flag mural for Pride Month 2021, Playland



Dropping off Diwali food donations, Dobbs Ferry Food Pantry

Addressing the Opioid Crisis

The opioid crisis has claimed over 750,000 American lives, and has ravaged families and communities. Local governments had to stretch their budgets to deal with the myriad problems caused by these highly addictive drugs, while large corporations and their shareholders reaped profits. In 2017, I sponsored the first legislation in Westchester County authorizing our County Attorney to sue those responsible. Since then, Westchester has joined additional lawsuits to wrest ill-gotten gains from the manufacturers and distributors.



Attorney General Letitia James bringing \$13 million in opioid lawsuit settlement funds to Westchester County

Earlier this fall, the New York State Attorney General announced that Westchester County will receive over \$13.5 million from the settlement of the first opioid lawsuit, with more compensation on the way.

These settlements will not bring back those who needlessly died, or heal their broken families, but I hope that we'll be able to use this money to help our society make real gains against the scourge of opioid addiction. ■