



Westchester County Legislator  
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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 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 me to attend a meeting of your local organization to discuss what County government does, please contact my office.

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# Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS



Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years

Fall 2018 Newsletter



## MaryJane Shimsky

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

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

What a difference a year makes! Westchester County now has a new County Executive, 5 new legislators (out of a 17- person Board of Legislators), and stronger relationships between the Board and our County departments. We are fast moving ahead on many legislative priorities. However, fixing our crumbling infrastructure and securing our finances remain long-term projects.

This year, the Board has passed laws ending gun shows on County property; raising the tobacco purchasing age to 21; insuring that County law enforcement will not be coopted by the federal government; ending a practice that contributes to salary discrimination against women, people of color and older workers; protecting LGBTQ youth, and establishing earned sick time for most workers in our County.

One of Westchester's greatest responsibilities involves infrastructure. So far, we've completed the Ashford Avenue Bridge reconstruction and are bringing new energy to flood mitigation efforts. I am currently working with the County Executive to move up repairs to a long-neglected section of the South County Trailway, and to fix County roads.

But completing all needed repairs will take time. Our new administration has inherited a \$1.8 billion capital projects backlog, construction problems at Sprain Ridge Pool, and unacceptable delays with repairs at Playland. And while control of Westchester County Airport has gotten a lot of public attention, the facility needs repairs and updating. I will continue to bring attention to our infrastructure needs.

We also must move ahead in a challenging fiscal climate. Lack of prudent financial planning during the last administration resulted in a \$32 million County deficit last year. Increased sales tax proceeds may reduce projected deficits this year, but a big operating deficit for 2018 is still possible. Moreover, completing long-delayed labor union settlements will cost tens of millions more.

I look forward to continuing my work on your behalf. Please contact me with your questions and concerns.

Sincerely,



For the first time in its history, the Board of Legislators is a female-majority body

## United Westchester Task Force

Power outages have become more frequent, and last longer. Our economy can progress unimpeded, and we can protect vulnerable populations such as infants, senior citizens and the chronically ill, only if we have reliable electricity. But our electrical grid is becoming less reliable.

I have joined 11 other local officials on the steering committee of United Westchester, a coalition dedicated to making our electric companies more accountable to the people who rely on their services. The task force is examining numerous factors contributing to the sorry state of affairs, and meeting with State officials to help bring about needed reform. ■

## Legislative Roundup

**GUN SHOW BAN:** County Executive Latimer's first official act in January was to sign an executive order reinstating a ban on gun shows on County property. Shortly thereafter, the Board of Legislators enacted the ban as a legislative act.



**TOBACCO 21:** This spring, Westchester joined the growing number of New York counties in raising the age for purchasing tobacco products from 18 to 21. The law also covers vaping products, which are addicting an alarming number of our middle school and high school students.

**IMMIGRANT PROTECTION ACT:** This law bars the use of County law enforcement to

do the work of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE). It ensures that County law enforcement will be able to do its jobs, and not the federal government's. It also removes the fear, prevalent among documented as well as undocumented immigrants, that people who report

criminals to the police will face deportation. This law protects all of us from criminals.

**SALARY HISTORY LAW:** This law bars prospective employers from asking job seek-

ers about their salaries at past jobs. Salary history information helps perpetuate gender and racial gaps in earnings; it also is used to deny jobs to high-wage earners pursuing lower wage work.

**EARNED SICK TIME:** This law creates a right to earn up to five days of paid sick time per year for most employees of companies in the County. This protects workers, their families, and the public health.

**ANTI-GAY CONVERSION THERAPY:** This new law bans what is popularly known as "gay conversion therapy" for minors, a practice that has been condemned by mainstream mental health organizations. ■



## Parks Roundup

Here's information about some of our achievements and challenges:

**RIDGE ROAD PARK:** Last year we upgraded the playground, made the ballfield accessible to the disabled, repaved roads and fixed up the picnic areas and pavilions. These investments have paid off with increased visitors despite this summer's rain and high temperatures.

**SPRAIN RIDGE POOL:** Five years after shuttering this vital facility, there appeared to be movement last year when the shallow pool was opened to the public. But defective plans and rushed construction made a mess of the new facility. The pool is now undergoing extensive repairs, and according to the latest update from the County Executive, should reopen for the 2019 season.



son.

Meanwhile, replacement of the diving pool has been complicated by the discovery of asbestos during demolition. The pool's reopening date is uncertain, but we are cautiously optimistic about a 2019 opening.

**SOUTH COUNTY TRAILWAY:** For years,

my constituents have been alerting the County to increasingly problematic conditions along the section of the South County Trailway running from the Hastings-Yonkers border to Route 119 in Elmsford. I have been advocating the fast-tracking of a project to repave it. The new County Executive has sent the Board a bonding request to design the project. He stands committed to green-lighting the construction project as soon as possible.

Interns in my office have catalogued problematic spots along the Trailway. We have sent this information to the Parks department, so that they can begin temporary repairs. If there is a spot on the trail which concerns you, please report it to my office, and we'll report it to Parks. ■

## Ashford Avenue Bridge Project Completed

This past February, the newly-completed Ashford Avenue Bridge was opened to four-lane traffic, after approximately 20 months of construction. I first called attention to the structural problems with this vital span more than seven years ago. After years of delay, drama and hard work, we now have a new bridge that should safely link Dobbs Ferry with Ardsley for fifty years.

This and other now-completed major repair/reconstruction projects, like the Crane Road Bridge on the Edgemont border and the Warburton Avenue Bridge in Hastings-on-Hudson, will keep our traffic moving safely and help our local economies for decades to come. ■



## New Flooding Initiatives for Bronx, Saw Mill Rivers

The Bronx and Saw Mill Rivers are at a turning point as storms become more extreme, and as increased property development stresses our waterways. That's why the County is joining efforts to reduce flooding and make local rivers better resources for our communities.

The County has hired experts to study stormwater management and flood mitigation, as well as water quality, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities along the Bronx River. The study, which will take about six months, will help the County develop long term river stewardship strategies.

With Groundwork Hudson Valley and Center for the Urban River at Beczak (CURB), the County and our local governments are reviewing the state of the watershed, to make improvements similar to those contemplated on the Bronx River. This effort is being funded through grants from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Westchester Community Foundation. ■



River Spirit Music Festival in Hastings-on-Hudson



Gun Violence Awareness Ceremony at Theodore Young Community Center



March for Our Lives in White Plains



Reading Buddies at Yonkers Waterfront Library

## Protecting Our Community from Opioids

The opioid crisis in this country is breathtaking in its destructiveness. Raw statistics and heartbreaking stories from constituents demonstrate that Westchester is not immune from this scourge.

Last year, I proposed two laws to insure that the County is doing what it can to end this crisis. The first directed the County Attorney to join the other State and local governments suing the unscrupulous pharmaceutical manufacturers who falsely reassured people that these drugs were safe. It passed last year, and the lawsuit was filed early this year.

The second proposed law would provide more opportunities for individuals to safely dispose of unused prescription drugs -- this is important because as many as 70% of all addicts obtain their drugs from other people's supplies. Thankfully, New York State passed a very good statewide pharmaceutical takeback law in June, and it has been signed into law by Governor Cuomo. The County plans to participate in the public education efforts leading up to the effective date of January 2019.

This coming year, I plan to work with my colleagues on public education and drug rehabilitation efforts. ■

## Working with Local and State Governments



**SAFER STREETS:** This past year, my office worked with State and local governments to implement a safety speed zone of 20 miles per hour and improve safety signage outside of Dobbs Ferry's middle school and high school. Our joint efforts also resulted in improved pedestrian crosswalks at the corner of Jackson Avenue and Saw Mill River Road, at the Hastings/Greenburgh border.

**BUS STOPS:** For several years, I have been urging the County to make proper bus stops at several hazardous locations along Saw Mill River Road in Ardsley and Greenburgh. The hazards have increased with the new Rivertowns Square development. The new County Executive is working with local governments and transportation advocates to identify areas needing improvement. ■