



Westchester County Legislator
MARYJANE SHIMSKY
Proudly Serving the 12th District



800 Michaelian Office Building
148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor
White Plains, New York 10601
(T) 914-995-2095; (F) 914-995-3884
Shimsky@westchesterlegislators.com

Follow us online:

westchesterlegislators.com
 facebook.com/westchestercountyBOL
 twitter.com/westchesterBOL

**For up-to-date schedules and to
watch meetings live or on-demand:**
westchesterlegislators.com/meetings

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 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

Fall 2020 Newsletter

MaryJane Shimsky

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



A New Role



After years of chairing the Board committees dealing with our infrastructure, I have taken on a new role. In January, my colleagues elected me Majority Leader of the Board of Legislators. As head of the 16-member Democratic caucus on the 17-member Board, I participate in negotiations on legislation, budgetary matters, and Board procedures. I also serve as an informal advisor to my 15 colleagues—an especially important role now, as most of our caucus members have fewer than three years' experience on the BOL. ■

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This is my tenth year of writing newsletters to you. But there has never been a year like this.

Westchester County was one of the country's first COVID-19 hotspots. By the time you read this, approximately 1,500 Westchester residents will have died from the virus, with many others severely sickened. In response to the pandemic, your County government spent months scaling up testing and hospital capacity, and distributing masks and other PPE. The departments of Health and Community Mental Health have done yeoman's work since March.

The pandemic radically changed all County work, and our employees met the challenge. The Bee-Line bus system was reconfigured for safety, the Department of Social Services managed a rising tide of poverty and hunger, and the Parks Department kept recreational spaces accessible for hundreds of thousands of us trapped at home. The Board of Legislators upgraded its information technology, so that we could keep meeting and passing needed legislation. Just as our County departments and agencies hardly skipped a beat, the Board did not miss a single meeting.

Many challenges lay ahead, all of which require financial resources to meet. Thankfully, the federal CARES Act will cover the County's expenses responding to the pandemic—this year. As of now, it appears that the County's dramatic loss of revenue during the spring and early summer will have to be borne by the County. The fiscal prudence of County Executive George Latimer's administration and the Board of Legislators have helped us avoid the worst so far, but the virus' second wave is bound to make the 2021 budget deeply challenging.

The Board will continue to work with the County Executive, County departments and agencies, and our counterparts in and out of government, to meet the challenges no one saw coming mere months ago.

Sincerely,

MaryJane Shimsky



Happy 50th Anniversary, Board of Legislators!

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Board of Legislators, chartered in response to the "one person, one vote" cases that came before the United States Supreme Court in the 1960s. The current pandemic precluded a major public event, but we opened our October 19th Board meeting with a video tribute that can be viewed on our website, westchesterlegislators.com, in the "Meetings" section. For links to our special commemorative history book and video please visit <https://westchesterlegislators.com/latest-news/3135-board-of-legislators-marks-its-50th-anniversary>. ■



Herman Geist,
1st Chair of the
Board of Legislators

The Need for Reliable Utilities

United Westchester, a task force of elected officials advocating for our community before the New York Public Service Commission, has its work cut out for it again. After the power outages caused by winter storms Riley and Quinn in March 2018, and with United Westchester's input, the PSC ordered major changes in how our utilities prepared for and handled these events.

The response to Tropical Storm Isaias in August told a tale of two utilities. NYSEG, which provides electricity to Northeast Westchester, took the PSC findings to heart and showed great improvement. ConEd left another trail of frustrated customers and spoiled food in its wake. There were also serious internet service interruptions. United Westchester is going back to the PSC, and I am cautiously optimistic that we can obtain some needed reforms.



As a member of United Westchester's steering committee, I will be a relentless advocate for our residents' well-being and livelihoods. The need for reliable utilities is no joke. We are experiencing more severe and more frequent storms as a result of climate change. Westchester is no longer a bedroom community, but an integral part of New York's economy, especially as more people work—and their children attend school—from home. Waiting many days for electricity and the internet is not an option. ■

Parks Roundup

OUR AWARD-WINNING COUNTY PARKS SYSTEM HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT! THANKS MUST GO TO THE PARKS DEPARTMENT STAFF, FOR KEEPING OUR PARKS, BEACHES, AND POOLS OPEN AND OPERATING SAFELY. MEANWHILE, MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION WORK CONTINUES. HERE ARE SOME OF OUR MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES:



SPRAIN RIDGE POOL: After years of delays and false starts, it looked as if Sprain Ridge Pool would hit the ground running this year—until the opening was postponed due to COVID-19. However, with numerous safety measures in place, the pool was in use for most of the season, giving families some much needed respite and summer fun close to home.

PLAYLAND: Due to the challenges and importance of social distancing, the County made the difficult decision to close Rye Playland's amusement park for the 2020 season. This time was used, instead, to work on plans for needed repairs to Playland's infrastructure, historic architecture, and swimming pool.

There is still fun to be had at Playland, however. The boardwalks have been open, providing a unique place to exercise and enjoy glorious views of Long Island Sound. (A walk along the shore, and through the trails of the adjacent Edith Read Wildlife Sanctuary, make a great outing.) Drive-in movies in the parking lot provided fun nights out for many families.



THE SOUTH COUNTY TRAILWAY: Our trailways have been more important than ever this year. Plans are ready to fix the section of the South County Trailway running from the Hastings-Yonkers border to Route 119 in Elmsford. After years of problems with this stretch, work is expected to begin in November of this year. Relief to cyclists and pedestrians is on the way! ■

Westchester County Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force

In response to questions raised by the killing of George Floyd in May, County Executive Latimer established a stakeholder group to review procedures and policies at the Westchester Police Academy. When Governor Cuomo issued an executive order requiring local governments to develop a comprehensive police reform plan, this group assumed both functions.

The Task Force is comprised of a diverse cross section of the community, including law enforcement, local government, the legal profession, clergy, activists, and everyday citizens with a demonstrated interest in law enforcement. Three County Legislators are Task Force members. Six sub-groups within the Task Force address the following topics: Transparency, Accountability, Community Engagement, Training and Equipment, Qualification and Recruitment, and Policies and Procedures.

The Task Force has been hosting public forums, both live and virtual, and will send a draft plan to the Board of Legislators by the end of 2020. The County's final plan must be approved by April 2, 2021, to be eligible for future State funding.

If you are interested in speaking at a public forum, you can learn about Task Force events by joining my E-News list at westchesterlegislators.com/district-12. ■

Board of Legislators Election Information Gathering Task Force

After voters experienced long lines and other problems during the June 2020 primary, I became one of four legislators appointed to this body by Board Chairman Ben Boykin. After gathering input from Westchester voters, we submitted a 21-page report with twelve key recommendations for improvements in this fall's general election.

The Westchester County Board of Elections does their work independently of the County Executive and Board of Legislators, so the recommendations lack the force of law. The report was designed to inform the Board of Elections and the public, in the hope that it would guide the Board of Elections' decisions for the fall election. By the time you read this newsletter, we'll have a good idea of how things went.

The report is available on our website at westchesterlegislators.com/images/Newsroom/2020/eigt-final-report.pdf. ■

Food Scrap Recycling

Westchester County is expanding its food scrap recycling program. Food scraps take up a sizeable proportion of the material sent to our incinerator in Peekskill. Transforming them into compost, or converting them into anaerobically digested energy, can save money on trash disposal and reduce greenhouse gases.

Our municipalities now can use a County-arranged carting service to send their food scraps Upstate for composting. This will make recycling food scraps more convenient for our local governments, and reduce the cost of disposing their residents' trash. The County is considering long-term alternatives that will handle food scraps closer to home, further reducing greenhouse gases. ■

Exotic Animals Ban

Before the pandemic, the Board of Legislators passed, and County Executive Latimer signed, a law banning the use of exotic animals in live performances in Westchester County. In recent years, we have come to understand how inhumane circuses and similar shows are for the animals forced to appear in them. The use of inherently dangerous animals also poses risk to their handlers and the public.

No animal should be made to suffer for the sake of entertaining humans. ■



PHOTO GALLERY



Delivering masks and hand sanitizer to our communities in Ardsley, Hastings-on-Hudson, and Irvington



Ceremonial swearing-in, Springhurst School



Black Lives Matter rally, Dobbs Ferry



Voter registration, Theodore Young Comm. Ctr.