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*Proudly Serving the 1st District*



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**POLICE REFORM**

In March, the Board of Legislators voted unanimously to adopt the report of the County's Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force, establishing a road map for police reform in Westchester County. I was proud to participate as a member of this vitally important Task Force together with fellow Legislators, public safety personnel, community leaders, and representatives of the County Executive's office.

We thoroughly examined the report's 50+ recommendations for the County police and other public safety operations. Our adoption of the plan it is just the beginning of a generational process and reflects our continuing commitment to protecting the public, improving transparency, ensuring fairness and modernizing policing in Westchester.

Those recommendations included:



Introducing the Police Reform Resolution at the March Board Meeting

- Implicit bias and intercultural competency training for law enforcement personnel
- A formal review of the County Department of Public Safety's use of social media for branding and community outreach
- Establishment of community liaisons
- Increased multi-lingual communications
- Training in implicit bias and restorative justice for School Resource Officers
- Joint de-escalation training with the Department of Correction
- Increased Police Academy training in procedural justice, cultural diversity and bias-related crimes
- Creation and implementation of a County-wide electronic database for mental health behavioral cases and special needs populations
- Creation of a County Office of Police Accountability

I'm proud to say that many of the report's recommendations are already being implemented by the County's Public Safety Department. Others will require longer-term work by this Board, the Executive Branch and NY State government, to iron out details, explore legal requirements, and establish policies and processes. ■

**Westchester County Board of Legislators NEWS**

*Voice of the People of Westchester County for over 300 years*

Fall 2021 Newsletter



**Colin D. Smith**

District 1 ~ Cortlandt, Peekskill, Yorktown  
 Chair, Public Safety Committee



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Here we are halfway through 2021 and what a difference a year can make! A year ago, there was no COVID-19 vaccine, and people across the country were demanding justice for George Floyd. In response, Westchester vaccinations are up over 70% County-wide, and we established a Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force to address concerns regarding social justice. In addition, I am pleased to inform you that at the BOL we never stopped our ongoing work on infrastructure improvements across the County, and to support initiatives for families, small businesses, public safety and mental health needs, all while decreasing the County tax levy.

As someone born, raised, and living in our District, I have the advantage of intimately understanding our strengths and our needs as a community—I am deeply involved in what happens here. During COVID, I spent a lot of time ensuring that food and PPE got distributed to residents and first responders. I have worked hard to ensure that funds to upgrade crucial wastewater treatment plants were directed to the Yorktown sewer replacement in Hallock Mills, the Peekskill Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the Water Street Pumping Station in the Peekskill Sanitary Sewer district. And as a member of two oversight boards and as a resident, I will be vigilant that the decommissioning of Indian Point prioritizes the health and economic well-being of Buchanan, Cortlandt Manor and beyond.

Our District is a varied and diverse one, and I have had the pleasure of participating in so many meaningful events such as the Westchester County Department of Public Safety's "Safe Summers" kick-off, Juneteenth celebration, check presentation to veteran organization "My Brother Vinny," the recent 1st time ever Ecuadorian Independence Festival at the Peekskill waterfront, and presenting a Proclamation to Ridvan Foxhall in honor of Black History and Heritage Month.

Regardless of the challenges we may encounter in the next few months, rest assured that as your County Legislator I will face them head on—with resolve and creative solutions—for the well-being of all of my constituents.

Sincerely,



- 1 County's "Safe Summers" program at prom night at Hendrick Hudson High School
- 2 Peekskill Juneteenth Parade with Mayor Andrew Rainey
- 3 Presenting \$18K grant to Yorktown non-profit for veterans, "My Brother Vinny"
- 4 Copa Peekskill's Inaugural Ecuadorian Independence Day Festival
- 5 Presenting a Proclamation to Ridvan Foxhall in honor of Black History & Heritage Month

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

We continue our work to make Westchester a cleaner, greener and more sustainable place.

**INDIAN POINT DECOMMISSIONING:** The shutdown and cleanup of the Indian Point nuclear power plant in Buchanan will have environmental and financial consequences for our district, and the County as a whole, for years to come.



Last year, all legislators, as well as County Executive Latimer, wrote to insist that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) grant a hearing on an application by decommissioning company Holtec to take over the plant from its one-time operator, Entergy. Although the NRC did not grant the public hearing, legislators took part in a New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) Hearing, urging the PSC to maintain oversight of the process and negotiate for adequate financial and environmental protections from Holtec.

The PSC, before approving the transfer, negotiated a deal that addressed many of

our concerns, required the maintenance of hundreds of millions of dollars in important decommissioning trust funds, State oversight of hazardous materials and residual radiation cleanup, money for State and local emergency response, and robust public reporting by Holtec.

As a member of the New York State Indian Point Closure Task Force, as well as of the NYS's Indian Point Nuclear Decommissioning Oversight Board, I am committed to making sure that Holtec complies with the terms of the PSC, as well as with other regulatory standards to ensure the safety and economic security of Buchanan and beyond.

**PARKWAY NOISE MONITORING:** To combat noise pollution for residents living near our County parkways, this year we approved a study of an innovative technology solution to use automatic noise detectors to help the County identify—and ultimately ticket—drivers who violate legal noise limits. Under the program, the County will explore how to use noise detectors, along with pre-existing technology like traffic cameras and license plate readers, to automatically identify violators of current noise limits of 75 decibels.

Reducing noise is not just a quality of life issue. This kind of noise is often associated with dangerous behavior like drag racing. Drivers must not be allowed

to zoom through our communities without regard to basic safety and noise concerns. I hope that with this study we'll be able to arrive at a forward-looking, technology solution that we can deploy around the County.

**Replacing Diesel Buses with Hybrid and Electric Vehicles:** To make our County transportation fleet more ecologically sound, this year we approved an acceleration of the program to replace the County's fleet of 30-foot diesel buses with hybrid electric or all electric vehicles.

The County is also replacing 104 40-foot diesel buses with hybrid electric that are on order and are expected to begin arriving late this year.

At this point 54 percent of the County's bus fleet is hybrid electric or all electric, and the plan is to have the entire fleet fully hybrid or all-electric by the end of 2023. ■



## INCREASING TRANSPARENCY IN THE CO-OP MARKET

To make the process easier and more transparent, the Board voted to strengthen the County's disclosure law for the buying and selling of co-operative real estate.

The new provisions require co-op boards to provide written notice of a reason for rejection when a prospective buyer's application is declined. The reason, along with the notice of rejection, will

have to be filed with the County's Human Rights Commission. The requirement will allow the County's Human Rights Commission to better identify any pattern of illegal discrimination if it occurs.

The new law does not change any of the reasons that co-op boards may legally reject buyers. Co-ops have wide-ranging discretion in choosing who to approve and why, but under fair housing laws,

applicants cannot be rejected on the basis of race, familial status, national origin, religion, disability, or sex.

The new legislation also requires co-ops to inform prospective buyers of their co-op's minimum financial requirements or financial preferences before home seekers file an application, and requires fair housing training for co-op board members. ■

## VETERANS' TAX RELIEF

There are few things more important than supporting those who have served to protect us. That's why the Board voted unanimously to increase the property tax exemptions for veterans to the maximum level allowable under New York State law, raising the caps by nearly 39%. ■

## UPGRADING INFRASTRUCTURE

**WASTE MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION:** Among the most important jobs of County government is to improve the quality of life for residents and protect our environment by maintaining our wastewater treatment facilities. Over the past few years, we've been engaged in ambitious program of improvement and modernization of our facilities to make them cleaner-running, more energy efficient, improve odor control and protect ground water.

**YORKTOWN SEWER REPLACEMENT:** To protect major watershed areas, the Board this year released \$10 million in funds for a major effort to replace aging septic systems with new sewer connections for more than 300 properties in the Hallock Mills area of Yorktown. The County is custodian of the money, which comes from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. The project, backed by residents and local officials in Yorktown, will build a new 5-mile sewer line and help subsidize local connections to the line, ensuring cleaner water and protecting residents from costly expenses when aging septic systems fail. The Hallock Mills area had been identified as the watershed area has the greatest economic need, that offers the best physical feasibility for the work, and that will have the greatest environment impact. Hopefully, the project will serve as a model for similar work in other, nearby watershed communities.

**PEEKSKILL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT:** Our commitment to modernization of the Peekskill facility continued



Touring the Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Facility

as the Board approved \$16.5 million to finance Phase II of a plant including replacement of tanks and boilers that will make the plant more energy efficient. We also approved a \$1 million rehabilitation of the Water Street Pumping Station in the Peekskill Sanitary Sewer district.

**WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE:** Westchester Community College is an essential resource for the people of this County. Ensuring that students have access to a top notch facility with up to date technology is crucial to preparing them for the future. This spring we approved financing for a range of substantial and important physical improvements at Westchester Community College. These included the first phase of renovation of the school's Academic Arts Building, as well as replacement of the roofs of that building, the Library, and the Science Building. We approved funding as well for a project at the Library to replace windows with new energy efficient ones that are up to current code. We also approved financing for important enhancements to WCC's technology infrastructure. ■

## IMPROVING OUR PARKS

One of the best things about life in Westchester is the County's tremendous parks system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our parks were a great refuge for residents, and the County Parks Department did heroic work keeping the parks open, safe and accessible.

**SENIOR EXERCISE STATIONS:** We approved a \$1 million project to install exercise equipment for seniors in our parks—helping keep senior active and giving them a new opportunity to socialize in a safe environment.



**GEORGE'S ISLAND PARK:** We approved important rehabilitation of structures and services at George's Island Park in Montrose.



Opening Day 2021 at Rye Playland

**PLAYLAND:** After months of committee work, we approved a bankruptcy court settlement with Standard Amusements over the management of Playland that gives the County significantly improved terms over the County's 2016 agreement with the company.

New provisions include better financial terms, more oversight of Standard's work and operations at Playland, and more outside investment from the company. Standard will take over management of the park on December 1, 2021. ■

## HONORABLE MENTION

I WAS DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE TWO OUTSTANDING YOUTH LEADERS FROM OUR DISTRICT:



Presenting a Proclamation to Yorktown Eagle Scout Benjamin Brown



Presenting a Certificate of Merit to Peekskill Jandon Scholar, Isac Sacoto