



**2021 Term End Report on the Board of Legislators  
from Chairman Benjamin Boykin II**

December 2021



I was honored in January 2018 and January 2020 to be selected by my peers to serve as Chairman of the Westchester County Board of Legislators. By every measure, the last four years have been historic and consequential for this Board, the most diverse in Westchester County history, with more people of color among Legislators than ever before, and with a female majority for the first time. As Westchester County elected officials, our greatest responsibility is to work towards a County that is improved in every way from the one we inherit. When people look back on the last four years, they will see that we have done that, and more. History will be our judge.

I took office with great hopes for what we could achieve for the people of Westchester, despite the significant challenges we faced in terms of the County's precarious financial position at the time, and not knowing the unprecedented difficulties that would arise from the COVID-19 pandemic. But the verdict is in – our revitalization of the County's finances over the past four years has been a remarkable success, and the myth that the only path to fiscal health is to deprive residents of necessary services has been debunked.

Working with County Executive George Latimer and his team, the budgets we have passed since 2018 have eliminated one-shot revenues and borrowing to fund operations, cut the County's tax levy three years in a row, and have rebuilt the County's reserve funds to an expected \$300 million at the end of this year – from an historic low of \$65 million four years ago. Smart fiscal planning has made so much possible. We've made crucial investments in roads, bridges, parks, and green technology. We have approved a \$50 million commitment in 2022 for land acquisition and infrastructure improvement to support affordable housing – the largest single-year commitment in County history. And we made an unprecedented investment in childcare – which will improve children's lives, help parents get back to work, and help local businesses struggling to recruit and retain workers.

In addition, with the creative use of American Rescue Plan funds, we have been able to help small landlords, to stabilize rents and to improve the County's housing stock; to provide increased support for non-profit partners who serve domestic violence survivors, help people facing eviction, offer mental health and after-school support to children, and more.

With this transformative turnaround, the evidence is clear that with the right leadership and the right values we can strengthen the social safety net, invest in our infrastructure, and at the same time make extraordinary improvements in the County's finances.

I couldn't be more proud of our achievements over the last four years and the actions we have taken:

- to support Westchester's working families
- to respond to the climate crisis
- to restore the County's financial health while cutting the County's property tax levy
- to protect public health and respond to COVID-19
- to preserve and improve our historic parks system
- to rebuild our roads, bridges and infrastructure
- to ensure greater access to fair and affordable housing
- to protect public safety and reform policing
- to provide for Westchester's diversity
- to help our veterans
- to protect consumers and support small businesses
- to reform government ethics and improve government access, transparency and technology
- to respond to weather-related crises and hold utility companies accountable

While I am extremely proud to have led the Board during these historic times, the Board's achievements are not mine, they are the result of the committed, focused and collaborative work of 17 Legislators during these last four years. I am also thankful that the Board has had such an outstanding partner in County Executive George Latimer and his entire administration.

These achievements also would not have been possible without the incredibly able work of Board staff, especially during the COVID crisis, when we deployed new technologies and processes to ensure that the work of the people continued without missing a single meeting. I want to thank our Legislative Aides who do tireless constituent service, our Committee Coordinators who keep our crucial committee process running, the Board Clerk and staff for managing the work of an entire branch of government, our Legislative Director for managing the process of creating legislation from ideas, our extremely thorough Fiscal staff and Legislative Counsel for their expertise, and our creative Communications staff for revamping and upgrading our Board technology to improve public access and accessibility.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our three departing Legislators, Vice-Chair Alfreda Williams, Legislator Kitley Covill, and Legislator Ruth Walter for their outstanding contributions to the Board during their tenure and wish them all the best in their next chapters.

The opportunity to serve as Board Chair during these last four years, when we both celebrated the Board's 50th Anniversary and navigated the darkest days of the pandemic, has been one of the greatest privileges and the most formidable challenges of my career. It is a time and place I will never forget, as we look ahead with hope for a return to normalcy in our future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin Boykin II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "B" and "I".

**Benjamin Boykin II**  
*Chairman of the Board*

## SUPPORTING WESTCHESTER'S WORKING FAMILIES

- Salary History Law: Combating gender and race-based wage gaps by banning salary history questions in hiring
- Earned Sick Leave Law: Ensuring earned sick leave for workers in a law that became a model for New York State
- Fair Chance to Work Law: Giving people a chance to rebuild their lives and careers by eliminating questions about criminal records on initial job applications
- Wage Theft Law: Passing a law to protect workers from wage theft by employers
- Displaced Building Worker Protection Law: Strengthened protections for displaced building service workers
- Safe Leave for Domestic Violence Survivors Law: Ensured "safe leave" with law that gives domestic violence survivors time off to handle legal and safety matters
- Childcare: Re-opened Title XX; reduced the share of childcare costs paid by parents who are income-eligible for help; increased scholarship funding and eligibility requirements; increased reimbursement rates for providers to help them hire staff



## RESTORING COUNTY'S FINANCIAL HEALTH

- Cut County property tax levy in three consecutive budgets
- Rebuilt reserve funds from historic low of \$65 million to more than \$300 million
- Eliminated borrowing to fund pension obligations and operating expenses
- Eliminated one-shot revenues for continuing operations
- Worked with administration to manage use of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding

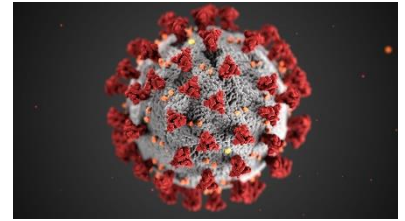
## RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

- Passed Declaration of Climate Emergency Resolution
- Banned expanded polystyrene takeout food packaging
- Expanded food scrap recycling facilities and services
- Approved installation of electric vehicle charging stations at County facilities
- Replacement of Bee-Line & County bus fleets with electric and hybrid vehicles
- Authorized energy benchmarking plan for County buildings
- Authorized lawsuit to clean up chemicals at Westchester County Airport
- Approved installation of water bottle refill stations in County parks
- Increased funding for flood mitigation projects



## PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

- Worked with all government levels to implement COVID-19 testing and vaccination, expansion of hospital capacity, changes to mass transit, access to personal protective equipment for first responders, and enforcement of public health measures
- Raised age for sale of tobacco and vaping products to 21
- Passed Pyrotechnic Children's Safety Law
- Strengthened power of Health Department to respond to infectious disease outbreaks
- Authorized lawsuit against opioid manufacturers leading to historic settlement



## PRESERVING AND IMPROVING OUR HISTORIC PARKS SYSTEM

- Invested \$117.4 million in capital improvements to preserve and restore historic Playland
- Approved bankruptcy court settlement that gives County improved financial terms and greater oversight over Playland management company
- Rehabilitation of North and South County Trailways
- Preservation and restoration of historic buildings: Miller House, Tarrytown Lighthouse, Merestead buildings, Wightman Mansion at Lenoir Preserve, Fire Tower at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation
- Renovation of playgrounds, ball fields, and walkways at Tibbets Brook Park in Yonkers, Willson's Woods Park in Mount Vernon, Saxon Woods Park in White Plains, VE Macy Park in Ardsley, Pat Henry Field in Valhalla
- Structural improvements at Glen Island, George's Island, Blue Mountain Reservation, Kensico Dam Plaza, Lasdon Park, Hilltop Hanover Farm & Environmental Center, Kingsland Point Park, Mountain Lakes Park
- Golf course renovations at Maple Moor, Mohansic, Dunwoodie
- Installation of senior exercise stations in County Parks
- Repair and renovation of Sprain Ridge Pool
- Expansion of Bronx River Reservation Trailway
- Reconstruction of Memorial Field



## ENSURING GREATER ACCESS TO FAIR AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Passed law to create transparency in the co-op market including requiring a written notice of a reason for rejection when a prospective buyer's application is declined
- Approved plans to create nearly 2,000 new units of affordable housing to help seniors and working families stay in Westchester
- Approved \$50 million commitment in 2022 for land acquisition and infrastructure improvement to support affordable housing – the largest single-year commitment in County history
- Fulfilled requirements relating to 2008 housing lawsuit settlement





## PROTECTING PUBLIC SAFETY AND REFORMING POLICING

- Adopted Police Reform and Reimagining Task Force Report -- a historic roadmap for generational reform and modernization of policing in Westchester
- Passed new requirements for second-hand and gem dealers to help law enforcement track and recover stolen goods
- Approved funding for new radio system for emergency responders

## PROVIDING FOR WESTCHESTER'S DIVERSITY

- Passed Immigration Protection Act
- Created County Advisory Council for People with Disabilities
- Formalized County LGBTQ Advisory Council in County law
- Banned conversion therapy for minors
- Approved appointments to newly created Arab American and Asian American Advisory Councils, among the over 560 appointments filled
- Passed Anti-Discriminatory Harassment Law



## SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

- Increased property tax exemptions for veterans to maximum allowable under NYS law
- Passed law encouraging hiring of disabled veteran-owned businesses in County contracting
- Created program to formally honor first responders who are also veterans



## PROTECTING CONSUMERS & SMALL BUSINESSES

- Strengthened licensing and disclosure requirements for contractors
- Passed legislation that put a cap on third party food delivery service fees

## REFORMING GOVERNMENT ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY

- Strengthened and clarified County Ethics Code
- Created Election Reform Task Force to implement necessary changes under NYS election reform
- Upgraded BOL website, streaming video and agenda management systems for ADA compliance, mobile-readiness, and improved search functioning
- Approved reduced term limit for County Executive from three terms to two
- Approved ban of County Executive's name or likeness on County property promotional signs

## REBUILDING OUR ROADS, BRIDGES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Approved extensive rehabilitation of County roadways including:
  - Washington St. in Peekskill
  - Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains, Mamaroneck & Harrison
  - Pinebrook Blvd. in New Rochelle
  - Replacement of parkway signage
  - Glen Island Bridge
  - Highland Rd. and Union Ave. in Harrison
  - Theodore Fremd Ave. and Midland Ave. in Rye
  - Pelham Parkway in Pelham Manor
  - Orchard St., Main St., Grand Ave., Westchester Ave., and the intersection of South Broadway & Post Rd. in White Plains
  - Main St. in Eastchester
  - Farragut Ave. in Hastings-on-Hudson
  - Bronx River Parkway in Greenburgh, Scarsdale and Eastchester
  - Greenwich Rd. in Bedford
  - Old Saw Mill River Rd. and Columbus Ave. in Mt. Pleasant
  - Main St. and Washington St. in Peekskill
  - Bedford Rd. in Pleasantville
  - Seven Bridges Rd. in New Castle
  - Long Ridge Rd. in Pound Ridge
  - Louisa St. and along Charles Point Ave. in Peekskill
  - Bronx River Parkway & Cross County Parkway ramps
- Rehabilitation of County Airport Runway
- Rehabilitation of buildings and technology at Westchester Community College
- Renovation, modernization and odor control investments at pumping stations and wastewater treatment plants in Yonkers, Mamaroneck, Blind Brook, Peekskill, and Port Chester
- Approved new, clearer signage for Valhalla campus which includes Westchester Community College and Westchester Medical Center

