

# Westchester Rising

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## County Center in White Plains Opens as COVID Vaccine Center Limited Doses Available



The County Center in White Plains, Westchester's first COVID Vaccination Site

By Dan Murphy

Last week, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the opening of a state-run vaccination site here in Westchester, at the Westchester County Center in White Plains. Appointments were being accepted and the site was open to the public on January 13.

To further accelerate the vaccination rate of priority health care workers, and begin the vaccination of newly eligible New Yorkers. New York has established a network of distribution sites that will supplement the work being done in hospitals to prevent any one hospital from becoming overburdened.

Since federal supply severely limits the ability to distribute vaccine, New Yorkers are encouraged to remain patient and are advised not to show up at vaccination sites without an appointment. New York's vast distribution network and large population of eligible individuals far exceed the vaccine supply coming from the federal government, which is arriving at a rate of approximately 300,000 doses per week. As such, eligible New Yorkers should be prepared to receive an appointment date as far as 14 weeks or further in the future.

"New York State is rapidly expanding our networks and capabilities to get as many New Yorkers vaccinated as fast as our supply allows," Governor Cuomo said. "The new vaccine sites across the State will expedite our distribution to get our most vulnerable New Yorkers vaccinated efficiently. Our greatest hindrance continues to be federal inaction. We have come too far to be held back in our efforts by the inadequate vaccine supply from the federal government. I encourage New Yorkers to be patient throughout this process and urge our federal government to increase the supply to states."

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## County Executive Latimer Announces Re-Election Bid Why Nobody Wants To Run Against Him



Westchester County Executive George Latimer

By Dan Murphy

Westchester County Executive George Latimer made it official on Jan. 11, that he will be seeking a second term. "I am announcing today that I am seeking a Second Term as County Executive.... with the new term limits law in place, this would be my final term if elected. We've done a lot, in a difficult time...but we have more to do. And we can accomplish these things - together," said Latimer in a short video posted online.

Latimer has served Westchester in the middle of a pandemic. This is uncharted territory, as he likes to say, and he is right, not only for county government but for all of our lives, jobs, and most important the health of our families.

So there is little time for Latimer to make a large campaign kickoff announcement, especially when the Westchester County Center becomes a COVID vaccine location and tens of thousands of county residents are ready to get their shot.

Latimer made the announcement now because the political calendar in NY State has moved all dates and deadlines up; conventions are held at the end of Jan, and candidates have to go out and get signatures in Feb. and March. The whole process is over in April and the democratic primary, which many now be the most important election in Westchester, will take place this year on June 22.

With just a few weeks left for a candidate to step forward, nobody wants to run against George Latimer. Not a progressive democrat, nor a republican.

The rumors that State Senator Alessandra Biaggi would challenge Latimer from the left are FALSE, she is not running for county executive, nor has anyone to the left of Latimer. County Clerk Tim Itoni is facing such a challenge, from Yonkers City Councilwoman Shanae Williams.

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## White Supremacist Hate Stickers Found in Six Westchester Locales



Suspects wanted for white supremacist stickers placed in Sleepy Hollow

By Dan Murphy

Westchester District Attorney Mimi Rocah joined with six, local Westchester Police Chiefs to stand opposed to the recent placement of white supremacist stickers in different communities across the county, and to seek information on those suspected of spreading the hate.

"An investigation has been launched by multiple law enforcement agencies in Westchester as they attempt to locate suspects who have been posting stickers that carry white nationalist and supremacist messages," said DA Rocah in a joint statement with New Rochelle Deputy Police Commissioner Robert Gazzola, Scarsdale Police Chief Andrew Maturro, Sleepy Hollow Police Chief Anthony Bueti, Tarrytown Police Chief John Barbelet, White Plains Police Chief Joseph Castelli and Yorktown Police Chief Robert Noble.

"In recent weeks, the jurisdictions listed above have encountered a number of incidents in which stickers carrying white nationalist and white supremacist messages and promoting groups that support these beliefs have been placed in public spaces. These stickers were found in areas that are home to or frequented by racial and ethnic minorities. We strongly condemn these actions to the extent that they are intended to intimidate and cause fear in our communities.

"The Westchester County District Attorney's Office and police departments around the county are working together to investigate these incidents and all incidents targeting people because of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or political beliefs. The perpetrators of one of these acts were caught on camera, and we are circulating images of them with this statement. If you have information about the identity of these persons, please contact the Sleepy Hollow Police Department Detective Division at 914-631-0300.

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## Stewart-Cousins Presents Voting Reform Package



State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, from Westchester

### Absentee Ballots are Here to Stay

By Dan Murphy

The election of 2020 will be known as the COVID-19 election, but also should be remembered as the election where the ability of voters to cast their ballot by absentee was expanded and the restrictions against it relaxed.

State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the democratic supermajority in Albany have proposed and presented a number of voting reforms designed to modernize the vote by mail system and increase transparency and voter turnout. The legislation passed builds on the Senate Majority's historic election reforms passed during the 2019 and 2020 Legislative Session. The package of bills includes legislation to require absentee ballots be counted as they come in, requires absentee ballot drop boxes at voting locations to reduce long lines, and allows voters to track their absentee ballot.

"Elections matter, voting matters, and leadership matters. We have seen how fundamental change can be achieved when people exercise their Constitutional right to vote," Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. "The Senate Democratic Majority has started the past two Legislative Sessions with legislative packages to empower New Yorkers and reduce barriers to voting. The bills advanced by the Senate Majority continue those efforts and will help reform and modernize our electoral system. I applaud the bill sponsors for their leadership on this foundational issue, and thank my colleagues for advancing these bills and standing up for New York voters."

The bills advanced by the Senate Majority include:  
Speeding Up the Absentee Ballot Counting Process: This bill, S.1027, sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Senator Michael Gianaris, amends

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## Billions for New York Under Stimulus Plans by President Biden & Senate Leader Schumer

On the heels of President-elect Joe Biden's unveiling of an American rescue plan and standing with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer said that the COVID 'rescue plan' legislative framing laid out just days ago by President-elect Joe Biden will be good for New York and could deliver more than \$50 billion in direct relief to the state.

Schumer said the funds would be in the form of unemployment benefits for those still without work, direct cash payments to struggling families, critical dollars to keep small businesses and nonprofits afloat, as well as vaccine dollars, transit relief, state and local funds and more. Schumer and Senator Gillibrand said they plan to fight hard for this plan, and Schumer, who will become the U.S. Senate Majority Leader this upcoming week explained his role in working to get this done.

"Come January 20th, when Joe Biden is sworn in as President of the United States, we will hit the ground running to deliver the American rescue plan because too many Americans still need help while this pandemic rages on," said U.S. Senator Charles Schumer. "And a plan like this, that delivers COVID relief to New York families, small businesses, a robust vaccine effort, state and local dollars—and expands to provide New York restaurants with direct relief like the RESTAURANTS Act, to provide even more help to transit systems and more, is one we will fight hard to fully achieve. The Biden rescue plan would deliver more than \$50 billion and counting to New York—and we'll need those dollars to get through this crisis and comeback strong."

"The American Rescue Plan demonstrates that President-elect Biden understands the urgency of this crisis, and will be ready to meet the moment on day one in the White House," said U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. "While we have a lot of work ahead of us, Senator Schumer and I are ready to enact plans to get New Yorkers the resources needed to rebuild an economy that prioritizes paid leave, child care, transit funding, Health Force, and an equitable vaccine distribution for all. I am looking forward to helping pass this plan to deliver much-needed relief to our state, local governments, and Americans all across the country."

Among many critical needs in the plan, the emergency legislative package would fund more vaccinations, provide immediate relief to families and small businesses, direct checks of \$1,400, assist the unemployed, and support struggling communities. Schumer, today, said, that while the plan is not a cure-all, and that some measures still need to be included like direct relief to restaurants, the framework represents a solid foundation that will ameliorate the economic and public health crisis COVID has delivered to New York and the nation.

Main aspects of the plan, as broken down by CNN, include beefed-up stimulus payments of \$1,400, enhanced unemployment aid, rental assistance and eviction moratorium, help for the hungry, more money for child care and child tax credits, more assistance for small business, aid for states and schools, increased support for vaccines and testing, and more. These are the key aspects of the \$1.9 trillion proposal President-elect Biden released last week.

This past December, Schumer announced New York would receive more than \$54 billion in coronavirus relief funding as part of the roughly \$900 billion dollar bipartisan package passed by Congress. For New York, the deal included \$20 billion in small business loans, \$9 billion in \$600 direct cash payments, \$6.4 billion for enhanced unemployment benefits, \$4.2 billion for the MTA, \$4 billion for the state's public schools and \$1.3 for emergency rental assistance, amongst other critical wins that included roughly \$13 billion in funds going directly to New York state governments. Schumer also announced, this past Thursday, that he worked with President-elect Biden to release \$2 billion in COVID aid for New York—FEMA disaster funds—previously blocked by President Trump.

### White Supremacists Hate Stickers, continued from pg 1-

"The District Attorney's Office and law enforcement agencies are committed to keeping our communities safe while also respecting the First Amendment rights of all Americans," end of statement.

The stickers were placed before the attack on the Capitol in Washington DC on January 6. The stickers highlighted the white supremacist group Patriot Front, and said "America First" and "Better dead than red" Similar stickers have been found recently in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Thirteen different stickers were placed in the Village of Sleepy Hollow and it took volunteers ten hours to travel around the village to find and remove them. One of the stickers was placed outside the Sleepy Hollow Police Department, where video cameras are believed to have caught two of the persons involved.

"No matter how small this seems in the criminal world of statutes, we take this seriously and are going to investigate it," said Rocah.

According to The Anti-Defamation League, ADL, "Patriot Front is a white supremacist group whose members maintain that their ancestors conquered America and bequeathed it solely to them. Patriot Front espouses racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance under the guise of preserving the "ethnic and cultural origins" of their European ancestors. Patriot Front spreads their hateful propaganda via the Internet and by distributing banners, fliers, posters and stickers. They define themselves as American fascists or American nationalists who are focused on preserving America's identity as a European-American identity."



## Harrison High School Teen Overcomes Obstacles to Create Conservative Club



Luke Wong

By Dan Murphy

Meet Luke Wong, a 17-year-old junior at Harrison High School. Wong is one of a few Conservatives both at the school and in Westchester who are not afraid to debate their views in the public. For two years, Wong has been trying to open a chapter of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) club at his high school because "I was really inspired to bring a conservative message to campus. I hoped to open up dialogue. I thought that the school would be totally willing to go for it."

Twenty-five other students at HHS expressed a desire to join the club and give it a try. Wong claims that in April 2019 his request was rejected by the administrators in the Harrison School District.

"I didn't get a clear-cut reason why," said Wong, and after a second rejection, he was helped by the Alliance Defending Freedom, (ADF) who was able to represent Wong and shortly thereafter the club was approved with a teacher advisor.

The Harrison School District claimed that Wong, "provided additional information and made adjustments to the application as requested by the District, and the club was approved."

Wong and the ADF don't agree that paperwork was the reason it took two years to get a conservative club at the high school. "They weren't interested in having my voice on campus, but free speech is really important in high school and college campuses," said Luke.

"The explanation [of rejection] was different every single time," said ADF lawyer Caleb Dalton, adding that the school's position was unconstitutional and discriminatory. ADF threatened to sue on behalf of Wong and YAF if the school didn't recognize the chapter. "Intolerant administrators, seeking to preserve an ideological echo chamber where only certain ideas are heard, often resort to shameful and unconstitutional tactics to suppress conservative students," said YAF spokesman Spencer Brown.

Finally, on Dec. 16, 2020, the school approved a staff advisor for the club. It's not easy being red in school these days, the teen said, adding that young conservatives fear "being cancelled or ostracized. People would label me. They'll default to calling me racist or just not speak to me," said Wong, a grandchild of Chinese immigrants who passed through Ellis Island.

Luke was interviewed by Fox News and said, "After I learned about Young Americans for Freedom, I was energized by their ideas of free speech, limited government and traditional values. I wanted to bring those ideas to my high school, because school is supposed to be the marketplace of ideas. I really had to think to myself is this worth it, but I spoke to students about it who thought it was really important."

The legal argument for Wong being permitted to create his group in high school is that when the school district permits student groups, all student groups must be allowed to meet, according to the United States Supreme Court, as long as the club and its meetings are open to every student, and Luke Wong's, YAF club is open to everyone.

Harrison School District Superintendent Lou Wohl wrote that it appeared that the club was not open to all members, but then reversed his opinion and that of the school district.

"The school can make any statement they want, but they were violating my first amendment rights by denying my YAF application. Schools have no businesses restricting my free speech. We now have 20 people in our google classroom and it was worth it," said Wong.

Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) is an ideologically conservative youth activism organization that was founded in 1960 as a coalition between traditional conservatives and libertarians on American colleges. It was founded by William F. Buckley.

Young America's Foundation is a subsidiary of Young Americans for Freedom, and is committed to ensuring that increasing numbers of young Americans understand and are inspired by the ideas of individual freedom, a strong national defense, free enterprise, and traditional values.

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## State and County Legislators Address Local Summit



Local Summit participants included State Senator Shelley Mayer, Assemblyman Steve Otis, and County Legislator Catherine Parker

By Nina Recio

After a week of unprecedented upheaval in our nation, local legislators New York State Senator Shelley Mayer, New York State Assemblyman Steve Otis and Westchester County Legislator Catherine Parker spoke, via Zoom, at the Local Summit's first program of 2021 on Tuesday, January 12.

The panelists acknowledged their deep concern for the potential dangers now confronting the nation after last week's assault on the Capitol and discussed the safety measures being taken at their respective legislative houses to protect legislators and staff from both potential acts of violence and Covid-19. These measures include remote participation in legislative sessions and committee meetings and social distancing. Senator Mayer expressed her confidence in the security being provided by state police.

Notwithstanding their concerns for the safety and welfare of the nation and state, as well as themselves, our legislators displayed a preparedness and appetite to tackle the persistent problems facing our state and local communities as a result of the events of this past year.

There was agreement among the legislators that the priority is to address the impact of the pandemic and to improve the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine, which has not been as smooth as desired. The panelists also noted that the pandemic's impact was disproportionately affecting poor people and people of color, underscoring the inequities in our society.

Among the efforts cited by the panelists to help New Yorkers, particularly its lower income citizens, is the extension of the eviction moratorium until May 2021. In order to take advantage of this program a tenant must certify that the hardship is Covid-related. Assemblyman Otis advised that financial assistance also is available to small landlords. Additionally, Legislator Parker reported that the County has allotted money for a study on legislation that would provide "right-to-counsel" in eviction proceedings, similar to a law which currently exists in New York City. The study should be completed within the first six months of the year, according to Legislator Parker. Senator Mayer mentioned a proposal for free broadband for every child in the state to ensure equal access to education.

The panelists were clear that the pandemic has had an enormous adverse economic impact on the state. The speakers reported that all revenues, but especially New York City revenues ("the engine of the state") are way down resulting in a significant state budget shortfall that will affect county and local municipalities. This has resulted in the suspension of all state grant programs, such as clean water infrastructure. The panelists were united in expressing the need for federal assistance but also expressed optimism that this would be a priority of the incoming Biden administration and, hopefully, the aid would arrive quickly as New York has an April budget deadline.

Also of concern to the panelists was the difficulties confronting the restaurant and food service industries due to the pandemic. Assemblyman Otis explained how the problems manifest in several ways. In addition to a restaurant's limited ability to serve patrons, many restaurants have been subjected to abuse by food delivery services, described by Assemblyman Otis as "hostage-taking". This occurs when a delivery service charges the

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## God Bless America



By Eric Schoen

There was no Inaugural Parade where the newly inaugurated President of the United States got out of his vehicle and strode, family members in tow down the streets of Washington, D.C. No Inaugural Balls where people and corporations paid thousands of dollars to get a glimpse of the President and his wife dancing in one of the great hotel ballrooms of our nation's Capitol.

I tried numerous times over the years to get a ticket to one of the balls. I wasn't expecting anything more than a cash bar and maybe a piece of cold, rubbery chicken on a plate with a few vegetables, potatoes and stale rolls. Never had any luck. Due to COVID-19 I knew it wasn't happening this year.

No visits by the throngs there for the occasion to the Washington Monument, Lincoln or Jefferson Memorials to honor Presidents of the past. Certainly no stopping by to greet the newly sworn in members of the House of Representatives or Senate who represent you. Add security to the myriads of issues causing these disruptions this year.

On Wednesday Joseph Robinette Biden was sworn in as the President of these great United States with Kamala Harris sworn in as his Vice President. Both of them placing their hands on the Bible sworn into office by the Supreme Court Justices of United States. The ritual we go through every four years continued, and despite impeachment attempts and so many other issues the great tradition lives on.

Nothing, no nothing will ever stop this great occasion from continuing. We are grateful for that. Our Government goes on without missing a beat as it has for so many years. We are represented by two United States Senators 11 and one Congressperson. Jamaal Bowman has replaced Eliot Engel as Congressman for many of us. Mondaire Jones has replaced Nita Lowey who decided to retire this year. We wish Jamaal and Mondaire nothing but the best as they continue allowing 'We, The People' to be represented in the halls of government.

What more can I say other than, 'God Bless America, my Home Sweet Home. God Bless America, my Home Sweet Home!'

*The Journal News. Your Local Newspaper?*

When mom was alive the Journal News, the local newspaper was second only to the Bible. Actually when it came to learning about local news it was her bible. The paperboy or papergirl would deliver it late in the day after school, and he/she would get paid once a week, usually on a Friday for services provided.

Mom and dad and my sister and I read the Journal News, formerly the Herald Statesman to read about local news. The minute mom opened the paper she would turn to the obituary page to find out who died. My sister would join me in asking mom, 'Who died?'

The paper was filled with all local news, everything from what was going on in the schools and city to local perspectives on national and world

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## Letters to the Editor:

### Don't Impeach Trump-From a Westchester Democrat

I enjoy your coverage of Westchester politics and beyond. As a loyal Northern Westchester Democrat, let me give you another perspective on the impeachment of President Donald Trump for a second time.

I say don't do it. Let Trump leave office and let him continue to act as a hinderance to the republican party. Like a chain around the neck of the GOP, Trump will continue to tweet and give the advantage to democrats across the country.

We all know that the real reason for impeachment part 2 is to ensure that Trump can't run for a second term in 2024, when he will be 78 years old.

I say that republicans, and not democrats, should be calling for, and voting for impeachment because it's the best way to end his political career. If not, he will haunt this party for years to come. Any benefit that he has to the national republican brand ended in the Washington DC Capitol on January 6.

Eugene Driscoll  
Northern Westchester

### Run Somebody Against Latimer, Chairman Colety, or YOU RUN

I am a conservative republican who has lived in New Rochelle for 60 years. The Chairman of the Westchester republican party is Doug Colety, who is also the commissioner of the Westchester County Board of Elections, where he earns a salary and benefits of more than \$200,000.

There once was a rule in politics that if the Chairman couldn't find a candidate to run for an important office, they would run or have someone in their close inner circle to run. In Westchester, there is no more important office to run for than Westchester County Executive.

And I agree with your reporting that the current County Executive, George Latimer will be tough to beat. But regardless of the outcome, to not run a Republican-Conservative candidate against him would be much worse for the future of the GOP.

My nephew lives in Yorktown and says that the current Supervisor, Matt Slater, would be a great candidate to challenge Latimer. Can somebody find out if he would step forward for the good of the party?

And what about your cousin, former State Senator Terrence Murphy? Might he run? Unfortunately, there is nobody who has the youth and vigor in lower Westchester to do it. We have elected officials down here but nobody with the desire to take one for the team.

Our candidate for DA dropped out last year, as you reported. What's the problem, and do we need new leadership? What is Colety doing for his \$200,000?

Alfred Comis, New Rochelle

**Editor's Note: Mr. Comis, I am not related to former Sen. Terrence Murphy, Dan Murpy And not likely that Sen. Murphy or Supervisor Slater are going to run for County Exec.**

### County Center Vaccine Center, continued from pg 1-

This network includes the five state-run sites opening this week, as well as 15 more which will be announced in the coming days. This new network will also utilize doctors' offices, Federally-Qualified Health Centers, county health departments, ambulatory centers and pharmacies to get doses in the arms of eligible New Yorkers. More than 1,200 pharmacies have already committed to participating in this network, with nearly 400 scheduled to come on-line this week. Pharmacies will be provided vaccines for New Yorkers aged 65 and older, while hospitals will continue vaccinating 1a healthcare workers, and local health departments and union-organized efforts will serve essential workers in 1b.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer wrote, "Important Fact: New York State - from NYC to Buffalo to Montauk - Is only receiving 300,000 doses of vaccine each week. At that rate, it would take over 60 WEEKS to vaccinate every New Yorker. There are problems with the State system... and that happens when demand far exceeds supply and thereby insufficient appointments.

But that number is staggering... 60 weeks at the current supply rate to vaccinate everybody. There's your number one problem. You get on the State website and you can't get an appointment at a site because the location doesn't have enough vaccine committed to them. The utter failure of the Federal Administration to establish a NATIONWIDE vaccine distribution plan then requires each State to set up their own plan, with obvious differences among them.

Making it harder or easier to get vaccinated, depending on the State. We failed to have a nationwide plan to identify the virus as an emergency... we failed to have a national program to regulate social distancing or mask wearing..... we failed to have a national program for COVID testing.... and now, we fail to have a national vaccine program. But it didn't have to be that way. Some people were busy worrying about other things and ignoring the most important issue of the day. So the State, and the County and the locals will do our best given the circumstances but it is rocky and bumpy.

We open the County Center today as a vaccination center and we could get up to 1,000+ people vaccinated per day once we're fully rolling. If we can get enough doses of vaccine."

Governor Cuomo added that the Federal government was sending New York State 50,000 fewer vaccines than the previous week, when the State needs hundreds of thousands more doses to keep up with demand. This resulted in Cuomo contacting Pfizer on behalf of New York, asking to purchase their vaccines directly.

That action drew a harsh response from President Joe Biden's Covid Advisory Board member Dr. Celine Gounder "I think Governor Cuomo, himself, had said back in the spring that the situation around ventilators was essentially 'one big Ebay' with all of the states bidding against one another for ventilators, and I think this kind of an approach to vaccine allocation is going to result, frankly, in the same kind of situation that he, himself, was criticizing last spring," Gounder said.

## Peekskill Mayor Rainey Won't Seek Re-election



Peekskill Mayor Andre Rainey

One of Westchester youngest and most dynamic Mayor's had announced that he will not seek re-electon. Peekskill Mayor Andre Rainey said that after having served six years in elected office, four as Mayor and two on the Peekskill Council, that he will step aside at the end of 2021 to spend more time with his family and focus on his small business.

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to help build a 21st century city that offers hope and opportunity to everyone who calls Peekskill home," said Mayor Rainey. "At the end of this term, I will be proud to leave a Peekskill that is not only financially secure, but one that is greener, more economically diverse and inclusive, and one that is working to ensure that everyone who wants to live here can do so."

Mayor Rainey continued, "There is still a lot of work to do this year to keep the momentum going. I intend a positive transition to ensure that whoever the next mayor is, he or she has everything they need to continue the progress. After all that we've faced this year - the pandemic and the racial injustices - I've decided I need more time to focus on rebuilding my business, on my family, and most importantly, on raising my children."

Over the last four years, Rainey helped the City secure a \$10 million economic development investment from the State of New York, \$6 million in other grants to assist with projects including the revitalization of Fleischman's Pier and the installation of electric charging stations, as well as attracting a vast array of mix used development to the City - including 82 new units of mixed-income, affordable housing currently being built on Main Street. He also secured a deal to have the Boys & Girls Club operate the Kiley Youth Center under a 50-year lease with the Peekskill Housing Authority - along with \$2.7 million in funding to support the effort.

Elected mayor for the first time in 2017, Rainey defeated two-term incumbent Republican Frank Catalina and went on to win reelection in 2019 in one of the widest margins for a mayoral election in Peekskill in decades. Only the second African-American to serve in the job, he was also the youngest mayor in Peekskill's history, bringing a new level of energy and forward-looking vision to a city that, until then, had a reputation for fairly vitriolic politics.

As mayor, Rainey pushed the importance of collaboration and worked with members of the Common Council - Deputy Mayor Vivian McKenzie and Councilpersons Kathy Talbot, Patricia Riley, Ramon Fernandez, Vanessa Agudelo, and Dwight Douglas - to unify the city and ensure public policy had positive impacts on all communities. Together they created a more diverse and welcoming City Hall and brought a healthy balance to economic development projects. They also ensured the City paid greater attention to its youth, pushed for green initiatives by both the City and local developers, and began rebuilding infrastructure that had long been neglected.

"We couldn't be more proud of the all work that Mayor Rainey and this administration has done and how far the City has come since his taking office," said Drew Claxton, former Deputy Mayor and Chairperson of the Peekskill Democratic City Committee (PDCC). "He has had such a positive and tremendous impact on this City and shown what is possible when we elect progressive, forward-looking leaders." The PDCC will make their endorsements soon. "We are committed to continue the tremendous momentum that has taken place under Mayor Rainey and the Democratic leadership of City Hall," said Marina Ciotti-Hodges, Chair of the Nominating Committee.

## WESTCHESTER RISING

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and Westchester County

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## What to Know About Second COVID-19 Stimulus Checks



On December 27, 2020, the federal government enacted a relief package that included a second round of Economic Impact Payments (often referred to as “stimulus payments”) to Americans. Eligible individuals will receive a payment of \$600, or \$1,200 for married individuals, plus \$600 for each qualifying child. However, those payments gradually phase out for incomes above \$75,000 for single taxpayers, \$112,500 for taxpayers filing as head of household, and \$150,000 for married couples filing jointly. Taxpayers would be ineligible for any payment, unless they have a qualifying child, above the following income levels:

- \$87,000 for single taxpayers
- \$124,500 for taxpayers filing as head of household
- \$174,000 for married couples filing jointly

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Treasury Department began issuing such payments on December 29; most recipients will receive those funds by direct deposit. Paper checks and debit cards also began going out and will continue to be sent through January. For Social Security and other beneficiaries who received the first round of payments via debit card, they will receive this second payment the same way. As of January 4, about \$112 billion of the second round of payments have been sent out; overall, such payments are expected to cost a total of \$166 billion according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Visit [PGPF.org](http://PGPF.org) for more information.

### Eric Schoen, continued from pg 3-

events. Mom would turn to the sports section not to find out the scores from the previous nights Mets, Yankees, Jets or Giants games but to find out the bowling league scores as she had some friends who bowled and she took great pride on posting their accomplishments on our refrigerator,

Great columnists, Eileen Campion, Jennie Tritten and Gwen Hall to name a few. Dave Hartley, a ‘Yonkers boy’ served as the editor of the paper for so many years. He knew the history of Yonkers. If the Editorial on the Editorial Page had a Yonkers spin on it or information on historical Yonkers within, you knew that of the members of the Editorial Board Dave Hartley had written it.

Will David, the crime reporter kept you abreast of all things criminal in Yonkers. He would produce numerous stories each day on everything from business and home break-ins to who got arrested locally the day before. He was the kind of reporter editors loved. Always walking the courtrooms of Yonkers, gathering local police reports and chock full of police contacts who would provide him with crime news both off and on the record. He would have four, five maybe even more stories in the paper everyday.

I understand that times have to change. The Herald Statesman which itself was the combination of two Yonkers newspapers, The Herald and The Statesman became the Journal News giving the paper a regional flair. Many people stopped reading the paper because they read the Herald Statesman for Yonkers news and complained there were few Yonkers stories in the newly branded paper.

Which brings us to today. Several weeks ago I raised the question to the current Editor of the Journal News, Mary Dolan as to why there was no coverage in the print edition, still sold on newsstands and home delivered of a fire in an apartment building across the street from where I grew up. One person died. I provided her with a list of media outlets that had covered it. I obtained that list by simply using Google to see if there were any stories on the fire.

Her response: ‘Thanks for reading. Covered on lohud with story, photos, gallery. Holiday deadlines required preprinting print editions. Lohud is our breaking news platform.’

I wrote back to Ms. Dolan, ‘So am I to get the impression that people like my sister Who do not go online should cancel their print subscription if they want breaking news.’ Or want to know what occurred yesterday around town?

Four alarm fire in Yonkers last week. The building housed a supermarket, dry cleaner and a laundromat. Building reduced to rubble, currently being carted away. A story affecting many lives from those in the neighborhood who relied on the businesses to the young couple with a new born baby who owned the dry cleaner purchasing it several years ago. Not even a picture in the print paper.

A four alarm fire is a big thing. It occurred before an increasingly earlier deadline for the Journal News. I still am shocked that there was no mention in the next days Journal News print edition. And the words in Ms. Dolan’s email ‘Holiday Deadlines required preprinting editions.’ What does that mean? The local newspaper will have no local news in it if it falls on a holiday?

Sad. Tells you the sad state of affairs of daily newspapers in 2021. Question what the purpose is in buying a print edition of the Journal News. The paper doesn’t cost 25 cents anymore either. Maybe the answer is to stop selling print editions of local papers. What purpose do they serve with so many online resources?

One only hopes that after the pandemic pray god comes to an end and local events start happening the weekend section of the Journal News will list local happenings around town. Not that it did such a great job before the pandemic.

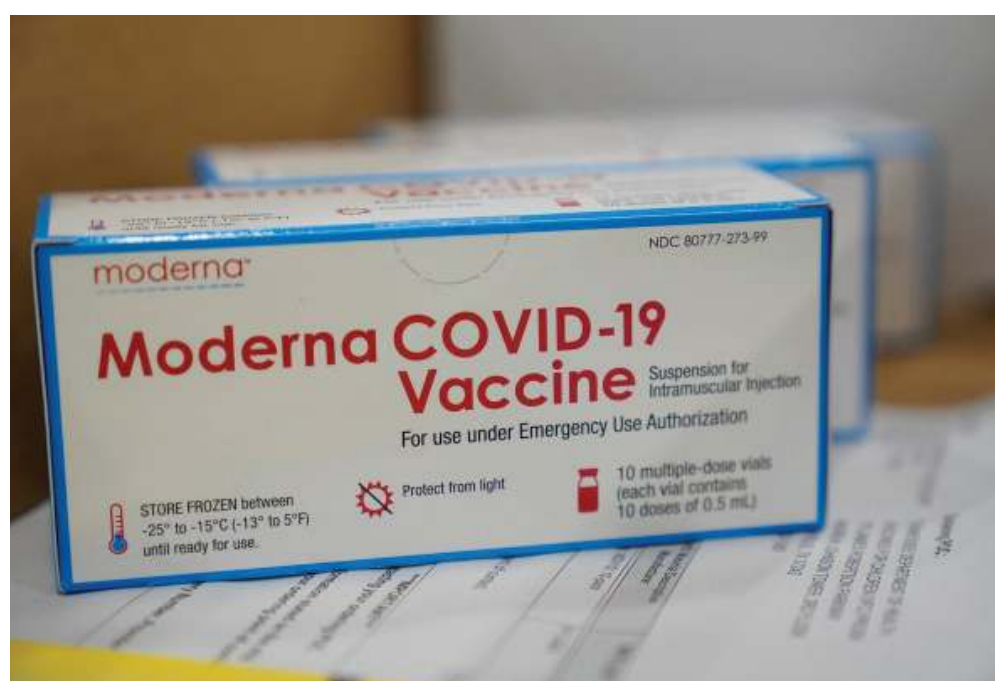
Fortunately you have this great paper to read. Local News you need to know. I am glad to be part of it. **Reach Eric Schoen at [thistooisonkers@aol.com](mailto:thistooisonkers@aol.com). Follow him on Twitter @ericyonkers. Listen to Eric Schoen and Dan Murphy on the Westchester Rising Radio Show Thursday’s from 10-11 a.m. On WVOX 1460 AM, go to [WVOX.com](http://WVOX.com) and click the arrow to listen to the live stream or download the WVOX app from the App Store free of charge.**

## Virtual Garden Conversation Sponsored by Untermyer Gardens



On Saturday January 31, 2021 from 2-4:30 pm (with intermission) there will be a conversation entitled Garden Elements and Styles: a Conversation with Toby Musgrave and Timothy Tilghman. They will be discussing garden elements and styles from famous gardens around the world, including Untermyer, pictured above. Cost is \$15. Tickets available at [untermyergardens.com](http://untermyergardens.com). Go to events then lectures.

## Should the Next COVID Vaccination Site in NY State Be in Yonkers?



Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano called on New York State to open a COVID-19 vaccine distribution center in Yonkers to handle the thousands of local residents who are eligible to receive it.

“Since Yonkers is the 4th largest city in the state and the largest in the Hudson Valley, it is imperative that we meet the vaccine needs of our region by opening an additional center in our city,” said Mayor Spano. “Positivity and hospitalization rates continue to rise here while appointments to obtain a vaccine are increasingly difficult to schedule. We can’t expect Westchester County Center alone to mass service most of those who live in the lower Hudson Valley. We need to expedite the vaccine to the areas where it’s needed most.”

Citing that Yonkers is the most densely populated area in the County and with the most cases, Mayor Spano added, “Three Yonkers zip codes were designated Yellow Zones by the State in November, proving we need to stem the tide of more cases. Our Yellow Zone mostly impacts our lower income communities, many of whom rely on public transportation, so traveling to the County Center for the vaccine comes even more burdensome. I ask our State health officials to consider Yonkers as one of the main hubs for vaccine distribution, especially as more residents become eligible for it.”

“Our collective goal is for all of us to gain herd immunity as we vaccinate more and more Americans – let Yonkers be a means to that goal so we can once again open up our schools, businesses and homes as they should,” stated Mayor Spano.

Suggested locations for vaccine distribution centers in Yonkers include the Yonkers Police Athletic League and Yonkers Public Libraries. Since March 2020, over 17,000 Yonkers residents have contracted COVID-19.

Westchester recently opened its first state run vaccination site at the County Center in White Plains, but reservations for vaccinations quickly filled up and Cuomo announced that while over 7 million New Yorkers are now eligible for the COVID vaccine, the state only receives 300,000 doses per week from the federal government. To date, New York’s health care distribution sites have administered 75 percent of doses received from the federal government.

Due to the federal government’s limited allocation, appointments have filled up quickly. New Yorkers are being urged to call your local health department, pharmacy, doctor or hospital for additional information and to schedule appointments.

“New York is working around the clock to get needles in arms quickly and efficiently, but we are being constrained by the federal government – they increased eligibility, but never increased supply,” Governor Cuomo said. “What they did was like opening the floodgates of eligibility. Now, 7 million New Yorkers are eligible, but we are still only receiving about 300,000 doses a week. Even worse, we actually got less doses this week at about 250,000. New York has done its part and now has one of the most expansive distribution networks to actually conduct the vaccinations and it’s time for the federal government to do theirs and actually increase the supply.”

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Notice of Formation of 11 Lincoln Avenue LLC filed with the Secy. of State of NY (SSNY) on 12/22/2020. Office loc.: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to 1354 Seneca Ave., Bronx, NY 10474. Purpose: Any lawful activity.

Notice of formation of EVERYDIMECOUNTLLC. filed with the SSNY on 10/23/2020. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC. 442 North Avenue New Rochelle Ny 10801 . Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of Formation of SHLP 140 LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with NY Dept. of State on 10/19/20. Office location: Westchester County. NY Sec. of State designated agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served, and shall mail process to the LLC, c/o Westrock Development LLC, 440 Mamaroneck Ave, Ste N-503, Harrison, NY 10528, the principal business location. Purpose: any lawful activity.

Notice of formation of Studio 160, LLC. filed with the SSNY on 10/13/2020. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC, 160 West 3rd Street, Mount Vernon, NY, 10550. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of formation of Modern Day Luxe LLC. Arts. Of Org. filed with the SSNY on 9/3/20. Office: Westchester County. United States Corporation Agents Inc. designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of process to United States Corporation Agents Inc. at 7014 13th Avenue, Suite 202 Brooklyn, NY 11228. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of formation of Everglow Consulting LLC. Arts of Org. Filed with the SSNY on 12/8/2020. Office Westchester County. SSNY designed as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC: 300 Gramatan Avenue Apt G81 Mount Vernon, N.Y 10552. Purpose: any lawful purpose.

Notice of formation of SAN PROPERTY HOLDING, LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with the SSNY on 12/28/2020. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC, 28 HIGHLAND AVE, EASTCHESTER, NY 10709. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of Formation of Brazilian Bistro LLC . Articles of Organization filed with Secretary of State of New York (SSNY) on 7/22/2020. Office location: Westchester County. SSNY is designated as agent of LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to: 491 Ellendale Ave Port Chester, NY 10573. Purpose: any lawful act or activity.

Notice of formation of Ayo Holistic Care, LLC. Filed with SSNY 7/22/2020. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail process to the LLC, P.O. Box 1201, New Rochelle, NY 10802. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of formation of Simple Wishes LLC. Filed with the SSNY on 01/05/2021. Office Westchester County. SSNY designed as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC: 300 Gramatan Avenue Apt G81 Mount Vernon, N.Y 10552. Purpose: any lawful purpose.

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## Legal Notice

Notice of Public Hearing on Appeal Before the Zoning Board of the Village of Tuckahoe, New York

Notice is hereby given that the Zoning Board of Appeals, of the Village of Tuckahoe, will hold a public hearing on Wednesday Evening at 7:30 PM on February 10, 2021. At the Village Hall, 65 Main Street, Tuckahoe, New York to consider the application of:

Quinn & Cara Kronen, Residing at 88 Maple Avenue, Tuckahoe, NY, who appeals the decision of the Building Inspector, who denied the issuance of a building permit to Build 5' into the required 25' front yard setback and to create a parking space in the 25' front yard setback.

The property is located at 88 Maple Avenue, and is also known as Section 44, Block 8, Lot 38

The nature of the application is for the following relief: permission to create a parking space in the required front yard setback, and permission to erect a bridge to connect the two, elevated front yard areas, to encroach 5' into the front yard setback.

All interested parties are urged to attend this public hearing at which time they will be afforded the opportunity to express their views and or submit written communications to the Village Clerk or the Zoning Board of Appeals, 65 Main Street, Tuckahoe, NY 10707

Edward D'Amore, Applicant  
January 15, 2021

Notice of Public Hearing on Appeal Before the Zoning Board of the Village of Tuckahoe, New York

Notice is Hereby Give that the Zoning Board, of the Village of Tuckahoe, will hold a public hearing on Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM on

February 10, 2021, At Village Hall, 65 Main Street, Tuckahoe, New York, to consider the application of: Main Street Depot, LLC

Project: 25 Main Street, Tuckahoe, New York , who appeals the decision of the Building Inspector, who denied the issuance of a building permit to:

Reduce the number of parking spaces required for the premises from 21 spaces to 15 spaces.

This property is located at 25 Main Street, and is know as

Section: 33, Block: 7, Lot: 9

The nature of the application is for the following relief:

Required number of parking spaces per the Planning Board in 2011.

All interested parties are urged to attend this public hearing at which time they will be afforded the opportunity to express their views and or submit written communications to the Village Clerk of The Zoning Board of Appeals, 65 Main Street, Tuckahoe NY 10707

Notice of formation of Panza NY LLC filed with the SSNY on 10/13/2020. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC, 640 Van Cortlandt Pk Ave Yonkers, NY 10705. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of formation of Byrd Enterprises, LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with the SSNY on 12/21/20. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC, 249 Hoover Road, Yonkers NY. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of Formation of Rella Electric, LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with SSNY on 12/1/2020. Office location: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of LLC upon whom process may be served. SSNY shall mail process to Christian Farella at 186 Stone Ave., Yonkers, NY, 10701 Purpose: any lawful act or activity.

Notice of formation of ThirdByrd, LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with the SSNY on 12/23/2020. Office: Westchester County. SSNY designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC, 249 Hoover Road, Yonkers NY 10710. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

Notice of formation of Miss DQ, LLC. Arts. of Org. filed with the SSNY on 01/19/21. Office location: Westchester County. SSNY is designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail copy of process to the LLC, 154 Buena Vista Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10701. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

### Summit, continued from pg 3-

the restaurant an exorbitant percentage for the delivery of orders and/or creates the appearance on-line of a special relationship with a restaurant where none in fact exists. Assemblyman Otis reported that some delivery services would download old menus with incorrect offerings and prices, to the detriment of the restaurant. He said that legislation was recently passed to address this problem.

Restaurant employees also face particular difficulties, according to Senator Mayer, as many are "excluded" workers, ineligible for unemployment benefits. Many of those employees turn to non-profits for assistance. Assemblyman Otis would like to see aid to those non-profits prioritized since they are keeping many others afloat.

Legislator Parker, who is the co-chair of the County Pandemic Reopening Task Force, reported that the county has already passed its budget and was able to continue all services. It is now looking towards passing additional legislation to help small business owners and start-ups.

The panelists were clear that there are other issues also vying for legislative attention. The county recently voted to appropriate money to improve Mamaroneck's waste water treatment center. Flooding in Mamaroneck is also on the minds of the legislators. The Army Corps of Engineers plan to address flooding had bi-partisan support and had been green-lighted, but it was halted under the Trump administration which determined that the project didn't pass the cost-benefit test. The legislators were hopeful that Senator Schumer would be able to secure the needed funds and restart the project.

Among the other matters of concern to the legislators are voting rights and police conduct. Assemblyman Otis stated that we need more polling places for early voting and more resources to facilitate voting and process votes. Legislator Parker indicated that this issue is part of a package of priority legislation. With respect to policing, the governor has issued an executive order requiring a comprehensive review of police procedures and policies and the county has organized a task force for reimagining policing in Westchester County and local governments are also undertaking an examination of local police.

This forum was co-hosted by the Larchmont-Mamaroneck Local Summit and LMC Media. The Local Summit is an informal community council that seeks to make life better for all in the tri-municipal area. To view this Zoom Forum: <http://bit.ly/SummitJan12Legislators>. To learn more about The Local Summit: <https://www.localsummitlm.org/>. To learn more about LMC Media: <https://lmcmmedia.org/>. Our next program will be held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 8:00 am.

## Wartburg Marks First COVID-19 Vaccinations



*Ms. Icy Bryan and Bridget Zimmermann Administrator*

In the Fight Against COVID-19, Wartburg has Reached a Significant Milestone – its First Resident and Employee Vaccination. Ms. Icy Bryan, one of Wartburg’s skilled nursing facility residents received the organization’s first vaccination. Ms. Lavern Goldson-Barnes, a Licensed Practical Nurse and union delegate was Wartburg’s first employee to be vaccinated. The initial shipment of vaccines were offered to all nursing home residents and one third of the nursing home staff following New York’s priority orders.

Ms. Bryan, a resident of Waltemade Care Center. 92, she has lived at Wartburg for since June of 2019. Wartburg President Dr. David J. Gentner, stated “The organization has been given enough vaccine for all nursing home residents and one third of nursing home staff following the distribution priority of our federal and state public health authorities.” The COVID-19 vaccine is available at no cost and it is not mandatory for anyone, although public health officials believe it is healthcare workers best defense against the deadly virus.

“For the first time in nine months it feels like our lives matter, and the work we do matters. We are ending a terrible year with renewed certainty that the angels are with us,” said Gentner.

“I’m excited to be the first employee to get it and I hope my coworkers will follow suit,” said Ms. Lavern Goldson-Barnes who is an employee of the Waltemade Care Center on Wartburg’s campus. “We need to do this for ourselves, for our residents and for our families,” said Ms. Goldson-Barnes.

“Not only is this an historic day, but also an emotional day as well,” said Gentner. “These front-line heroes have been putting their health and their lives on the line every day to provide care to those in our community who are frail and compromised,” added Gentner. “For this, we owe them our deepest gratitude and admiration.”

### *Latimer, re-election, continued from pg 1-*

One republican had stepped forward to challenge Latimer last fall. His name is Dan Branda, a relatively unknown former staff member to the prior County Exec. Rob Astorino.

Branda, who lives in Somers, was the only republican to toss his hat out into the ring, and for several months in 2020, he had the spotlight to himself and tried to gain some traction with several press releases, (including one that backed the accuser of Gov. Andrew Cuomo for sexual assault), but nothing gained any serious media attention.

Perhaps that is why Branda is now out of the race for County Exec., according to published reports, where he stated that he was pursuing “a family opportunity,” and was no longer a candidate.

This leaves no republican candidate to challenge Latimer. There are only a few republicans left in Westchester that have the Gravitas to challenge Latimer. And most believe that those few republicans have watched Latimer’s service as County Executive and determined that the risk and hard work required, during a pandemic to challenge him does not equal the long-shot reward of beating him on Nov. 2.

President Donald Trump has cast a dark cloud over the Westchester GOP, and the recent attacks on the Capitol have made that cloud even darker. Remember that last year, the Republican candidate for District Attorney, in the middle of a countywide election, quit.

In addition to his leadership as a “wartime consigliere” during COVID, Latimer has other notable achievements to present to the voters of Westchester. The most notable is passing two county budgets that DO NOT raise property taxes, including a 2021 budget that has a 0% tax increase after lower revenues from 2020-COVID.

Latimer promised not to raise property taxes if the sales tax were increased two years ago. He could have gone back on that promise because of COVID, but he kept his word, and in doing so, has taken away the republicans best argument, that democrats can’t control spending and will raise your taxes.

Latimer just did the opposite; county spending is down in the 2021 budget from 2020 and county property taxes will not be raised. He has taken the “Astorino’ argument about property taxes off the table.

And by the way, Astorino lost his State Senate race, which was the last hope for many Westchester republicans to hold onto any viability for the GOP. “The combination of Astorino’s loss, a county budget with a 0% tax increase, and Latimer’s popularity, has every republican saying thanks but no thanks to this race,” said one Westchester republican elected official. “I wish Doug Colety (West. GOP Chairman) good luck finding someone. At least Dan Branda was a placeholder on the ballot.”

Latimer has other achievements in county government to talk about if anyone is interested. Breaking ground at Memorial Field in Mt. Vernon, re-opening Sprain Ridge Pool, a new family courthouse in New Rochelle, and banning gun shows at the county center, are just a few.

Latimer is also a great campaigner, he loves the fight, and if his opponent wants to slug it out –he’s more than happy to do so. He now serves as the senior statesmen for westchester democrats and has good relationships with progressive and indivisible members of his party.

Most important, he has found an effective balance during COVID of showing empathy, while calling out anyone who isn’t wearing a mask or helping Westchester stay safe. I found only one political consultant in Westchester who thought that Latimer was beatable, or at least deserved an opponent. But he couldn’t give me a name.

Editor’s Note: We did exchange emails with Dan Branda, who told us that “to my knowledge, nobody has stated an intention to run on the republican side.”

## Stepinac Student from Greenburgh Accepted at Yale



*Kyle Shepherd*

Kyle Shepherd, a Stepinac High School senior and a distinguished volunteer of Town of Greenburgh community programs, has been admitted to Yale University where he will begin his studies in August 2021.

In a December 22 post, Town of Greenburgh Supervisor Paul Feiner congratulated Kyle, stating the young man was appointed in early 2020 as a member of the Greenburgh Police Community Advisory Board and who was a graduate of the summer police summer youth camp. “Kyle was also a Greenburgh summer intern who introduced former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to fellow interns during a Zoom meeting ...” He added: “Kyle told me that his experiences working with Greenburgh officials helped prepare him for his upcoming education at Yale.”

A member of Stepinac’s Honors Academy, the only-one-of-its-kind-in-the-region, advanced, small learning program for academically top performing students, Kyle completed with distinction the Town of Greenburgh’s 12th Annual Summer Intern Program. He was among a group of 30 interns who participated in the program designed to prepare Greenburgh’s youth for success by fostering communication, teamwork, problem solving and leadership skills.

He collaborated with other interns to produce a series of video public service announcements that were aired over the Town of Greenburgh’s public access TV stations. Among the topics addressed were racism, the need to wear masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the importance of participating in the census and pedestrian safety.

In addition to his academic and community achievements, Kyle has excelled as an athlete as a member of Stepinac’s cross country, indoor track and outdoor track teams. . For more information, visit [www.Stepinac.org](http://www.Stepinac.org)

### *ASC, Voting Reforms, continued from pg 1-*

various provisions of the Election Law in order to allow for expedited review and canvassing of absentee ballots without compromising the integrity of elections.

· Preventing Disenfranchisement of Absentee Voters: This bill, S.253, sponsored by Senate Elections Committee Chair, Senator Zellnor Myrie, prohibits voiding absentee ballots on technicalities where intent of voters is clear and the law has been substantially complied with, including where there are stray marks or the ballot is undated but is time stamped by the Board of Elections.

· Permanently Authorizing Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes: This bill, S.492, sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman, authorizes the Board of Elections to establish absentee ballot drop-off locations or drop-boxes to provide voters with a convenient and secure option for delivering their absentee ballots.

· Increasing Transparency and Information about Absentee Ballots through a Tracking System: This bill, S.1028, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, ensures that all voters in the state have access to absentee ballot tracking by requiring the New York State Board of Elections to create a statewide absentee ballot tracking system for absentee voters ensure that their vote is counted in the election while allowing counties and the New York City Board of Elections to also maintain their own absentee tracking systems.

· Implementing Permanent Authorization for Applying for Absentee Ballots Online: This bill, S.632, sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson, permanently allows voters to apply for absentee ballots online and allows absentee ballots postmarked through Election Day by making permanent Chapter 91 of the Laws of 2020, which sunset on December 31, 2020. Under current Election Law, applications may only be made by mail or fax.

· Creating Accountability for Timely Receipt of Absentee Ballots: This bill, S.516, sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, establishes a mandatory timeframes for processing of absentee ballot applications and ballots by Boards of Elections based on when the application was received.

· Enabling Earlier Applications for Absentee Ballots: This bill, S.631, sponsored by Senator Julia Salazar, permits Boards of Elections to receive absentee ballot applications earlier than thirty days before the applicable Election Day by making permanent Chapter 138 of the Laws of 2020, which sunset on December 31, 2020.

· No-Excuse Absentee Voting Constitutional Amendment: This legislation, S.360, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, amends the State Constitution to allow for any voter to vote by absentee without an excuse.

· Ensuring Voters Timely Receipt of Absentee Ballots: This bill, S.264, sponsored by Senator Zellnor Myrie, sets deadline for absentee ballot applications sent by mail to 15 days before the election, up from 7 days, to better allow for voters timely receiving their absentee ballots.

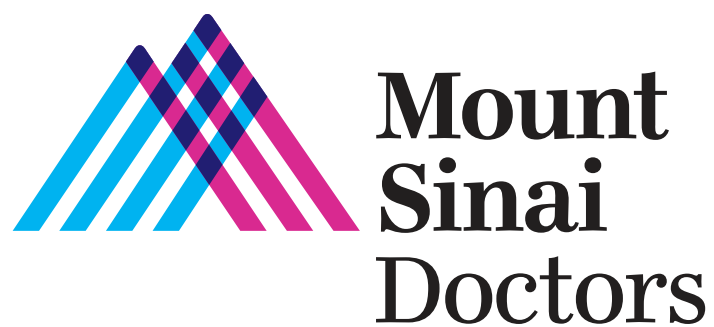
Jennifer Wilson, Deputy Director of the League of Women Voters of NYS, said, “The reliance on absentee voting during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for several important fixes to the state’s absentee voting operations. This package of bills will ensure New York State voters have adequate access to apply for, submit, and track their absentee ballot. These procedural fixes will give voters greater peace of mind when electing to vote by absentee ballot in future elections. We applaud the Senate for moving forward this package of bills and hope to see additional reforms related to the timing and transparency in reporting election results to the public.”

Jarret Berg, Co-Founder of VoteEarlyNY said, “The voting reform package being advanced by the Senate Majority will help modernize New York elections by expanding access, improving administration, and enshrining a series of due process safeguards to better ensure our fundamental rights are protected and respected.”

Dustin Czarny, Onondaga County Elections Commissioner and Chair Democratic Caucus of the NYS Elections Commissioners Association, said, “These legislative changes will go a long way towards fixing some of the byzantine process we have in New York. Improving our absentee and vote by mail system will not only give voters more options but will give clear direction to Boards of Elections across the state. I am happy to support these bills.”

Blair Horner, NYPIRG Executive Director, said, “Thanks to the reforms enacted over the past two years, New York has dramatically improved its voter participation rate. When it comes to voting, New York, which was once among the worst, is now getting closer to the middle of the national pack. But New York’s voting rate in 2020 was still below the national average. The package of bills being advanced this week, particularly the constitutional changes, will, if enacted, move New York closer to the national leader.”

Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY, said, “Common Cause/NY is pleased the New York State Senate is starting session the same way it has the past two years: putting New York voters first. Clearly, today’s package is just the beginning. We look forward to working with the Senate and the Assembly to pass even more crucial election reforms, most particularly restoring voting rights for folks recently released, this year.”



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